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The RING

CANELO ALVAREZ

DEFEATS GENNADY GOLOVKIN TO CLAIM MIDDLEWEIGHT CHAMPIONSHIP

INSTANT CLASSIC

CANELO-GGG REMATCH IS ONE FOR THE AGES

MIDDLEWEIGHT MASHUP

CANELO RULES DEEP AND DANGEROUS DIVSION

TWIN TERRORS

JERMELL AND JERMALL CHARLO ARE POISED FOR STARDOM

GUEST EDITOR

BERNARD HOPKINS

B-HOP RECALLS HIS TOP EXECUTIONS

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COVER PHOTO BY TOM HOGAN

Roman Gonzalez's fierce competitive spirit is only surpassed by his sincere compassion for his opponents. We're not worthy of Chocolatito, but luckily for us, the four-division titleholder isn't done with boxing. Gonzalez's bloody, brutal fifth-round stoppage of Moises Fuentes on the undercard of the Canelo Alvarez-Gennady Golovkin rematch places the Nicaraguan hero back into the 115-pound mix.

AL BELLO

WHERE ARE THE CHAMPS?

I appreciate that the Ring championships truly have to be earned. I do feel, though, that having only three champs out of 17, as of the September issue, really starts to erode that value rather than adding to it. It makes it nearly impossible for any organization or broadcaster to mention your titles to help the laymen understand just how good a fighter is. More Ring belts on TV is better than none. I do have a solution. Your problem is in your six ways a fighter can lose the belt. I believe that ways 2-6 need to be in conjunction with the vacancy being filled. If a champ moves up in weight, fails to defend for 18 months, etc., you don't strip him until a fight that meets your requirements is made. This allows for more continuity and could add value to your champions without having so many vacancies all the time. Less stripping and vacancies, more "passing of the torch" situations.

Drew Adkins
Red Deer, Alberta, Canada

EDITOR'S RESPONSE: It's a good suggestion. As of this issue, there are five Ring champions, but it's not enough. The Ring does not mandate fights or benefit from sanctioning fees, hence filling our championship vacancies is complicated by two things that plague boxing today. First, most of the top fighters only get in the ring a couple times per year, so it's actually extremely rare for the No. 1 and No. 2 (sometimes No. 3) guys on our list to face each other. Furthermore, the best fighters are kept apart by promoter and network loyalties, something which has the added effect of shows trying to undermine each other. Reader Victor Rivero *wrote in on the weekend of September 1 to eloquently express the latter problem:*

Tonight, jackshit on. Next week, two great cards on separate networks at the same time, AGAIN! Smfh.

APPLAUSE FOR 'SHOWTIME'

I would like to congratulate Shawn Porter for his title-winning victory over Danny Garcia. I had the privilege of meeting Porter at a boxing event in my hometown some years back. He is one of the classiest athletes you could ever hope to meet. A few years before he beat Devon Alexander for the IBF title, I told Porter that he would be Cleveland's first boxing champion since Joey Maxim in 1950. Once again, Porter's patience and diligence paid off against Garcia. Porter often is forced to play the waiting game in the vastly talented welterweight division, perhaps because he lacks the star power of some of the others. But the fact is, he's just as good or better than anyone at the top, and he proved it once again.

I am thrilled for Porter, since he exemplifies what a true champion is all about. The way he complimented Garcia's performance following the decision was pure class. Great fights and well-deserved paydays against the likes of Errol Spence, Mikey Garcia and perhaps a rematch with Thurman await him. Porter is proof that good guys sometimes come out on top.

Daniel McKrell
Parma, Ohio

TWEET OF THE MONTH

@titleboxing
The Ring Magazine was first published in 1922, and eventually awarded its first championship belt to titleholder, Jack Dempsey. What differentiates The RING MAGAZINE BELT is that it is only on-the-line when "the best fight the best."

Cecilia Braekhus is The Ring's first Women's Pound-for-Pound champ.

OK TO BE EQUAL

I feel it would be better for judges to score a round even than to possibly score rounds for the "wrong" boxer. It sure seems OK for an entire match to be a draw. Surely a few rounds could be 10-10. Perhaps this would lead to better results and the "right" boxer's hand being raised.

Marvin Johnson
Piney Flats, Tennessee

EDITOR'S RESPONSE: The Alvarez-Golovkin rematch evoked some "passionate" responses on both sides, and we appreciate your subtle but clear approach. You're right; judges should feel free to score even rounds more often. Bias will always be a problem, though, because for the "right" boxer to benefit from 10-10 rounds, we have to assume that the judges are already biased toward the "wrong" boxer. If that's the case, there's not much you can do. To completely remove bias, the judges would need to be capable of identifying a true statistical tie, and we know that's not possible. Or maybe they could just flip a coin every time they can't make up their minds, and maybe it would even out.

WRITE TO THE RING!
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Pictured left to right: Damon Allen Jr., Jessie Vargas, Fernando Vargas

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The RING

VOLUME 97, NO. 11 / DECEMBER 2018

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Sports and Entertainment Publications
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THE RING (ISSN: 0035-5410), Vol. 97, NO. 11 (DECEMBER 2018), is published 12 times per year by Sports and Entertainment Publications, LLC, P.O. Box 90254 Brooklyn, NY 11209. Periodicals postage paid at Brooklyn, NY 11209 and additional post offices. Postmasters: Send change of address notices to: THE RING, P.O. Box 433122, Palm Coast, FL 32164-3122. Single copy price $6.95 in U.S.A. and Canada (£4.95 in the U.K.). Subscription price U.S. And possession $39.99 for 12 issues including Canada, Mexico add $5. All remaining countries add $10 for 12 issues per year. Not responsible for the loss or non-return of unsolicited articles or photographs, which will not be returned unless accompanied by a self-addressed envelope bearing the proper amount of postage. The entire contents of this magazine are copyright ©2018 Sports and Entertainment Publications, LLC. No part of this magazine may be reproduced without the written permission of the publisher. All rights reserved. Publisher is not responsible for the accuracy of the content of advertisements appearing in this magazine, nor the delivery or quality of merchandise or services offered. No endorsement of any such advertisement is intended or implied. Advertisers and agencies assume liability for claims arising from the content of their advertisements. FOR ADVERTISING INQUIRIES AND RATES: advertising@sepublications.com. U.S. / Canadian and International distribution by Comag Marketing Group Llc, 155 Village Blvd #200, Princeton, Nj 08540. UK distribution by Seymour Distribution Ltd., 2 East Poultry Avenue, London, England, EC1A 9PT. Printed In U.S.A

RINGSIDE BY BERNARD HOPKINS

GREATNESS AT THE GARDEN

The night of September 29, 2001, at Madison Square Garden was history for me and for the middleweight division. It was special because I was such a heavy underdog against Felix Trinidad, and proving people wrong is something I've done throughout my life and my boxing career. For Trinidad, I trained and prepared myself at such a high level because I was determined to shut up all the doubters. I also did some distasteful things during the buildup. I simply had to win. If I didn't, my entire career would have been viewed as a joke.

Most of Trinidad's opponents lost by left hook knockout. I disarmed one of the best left-hookers in the world and took that shot away from him. I was in training camp with the late, great Bouie Fisher and constantly had my right hand protecting the right side of my face. I sparred like that in the gym and I ran like that when I was jogging in the morning. It was muscle memory and became second nature. I always had my right hand glued to my face.

The knockout in the 12th round was a perfect counter shot, and that punch took out more than Trinidad. It knocked the promoter (Don King) out. It knocked out every single thing that can go wrong on the scorecards. It knocked out the politics. It knocked out all the doubters.

This victory made people realize that I was going to be around for a long time, and I was already 36 years old. It's hard to win anything in sports at that age, especially a boxing match. If you look at GGG, he's 36 years old and just lost a hard fight to Canelo. I beat Felix Trinidad easily and knocked him out in the 12th round. A lot of people feel that I peaked against Trinidad but, given what I accomplished from that point on, I personally believe that I improved. I think I was a better fighter after 36 years old, and that's unique in this sport. To become better at an advanced age, when most athletes are declining, is pretty much unheard of.

The timing of me writing about this is ironic because of the rematch we just had between Canelo and GGG. That was a great middleweight fight. With that victory, Canelo just stepped into the doorway to greatness. He's not all the way in yet, but he's in the doorway. It's now about building his legacy and taking the fights the public want to see. You need to take fights where the people believe you can win or you can lose. That was the case when I fought Trinidad, and that is the formula that can lead to Canelo being rated as an all-time great middleweight. He's a pound-for-pound fighter with ring generalship and he can change up his style, which goes against what the stereotypical Mexican fighter is perceived to be.

If I'm being honest, the current middleweight division isn't what it was in the early '90s. Back then, you had James Toney, Roy Jones, Bernard Hopkins, Reggie Johnson, Julian Jackson, Mike McCallum and Gerald McClellan. The division isn't as deep now as it was then, and that's reality. However, you've got Danny Jacobs, Billy Joe Saunders, Jermall Charlo … these are guys who can derail your career and prevent you from reaching greatness. You also have great fights six pounds below at 154 pounds. You have great fights eight pounds up at super middleweight. There are matches to be made that can get you mentioned alongside the great Ray Robinson, the great Bernard Hopkins, the great Roy Jones, the great Marvelous Marvin Hagler, the great Carlos Monzon.

But none of that comes overnight, at least not for me. It's about who you beat, the risks you take and how you win. It's all about credibility, and the fights Canelo takes in the future are his building blocks to greatness. RING

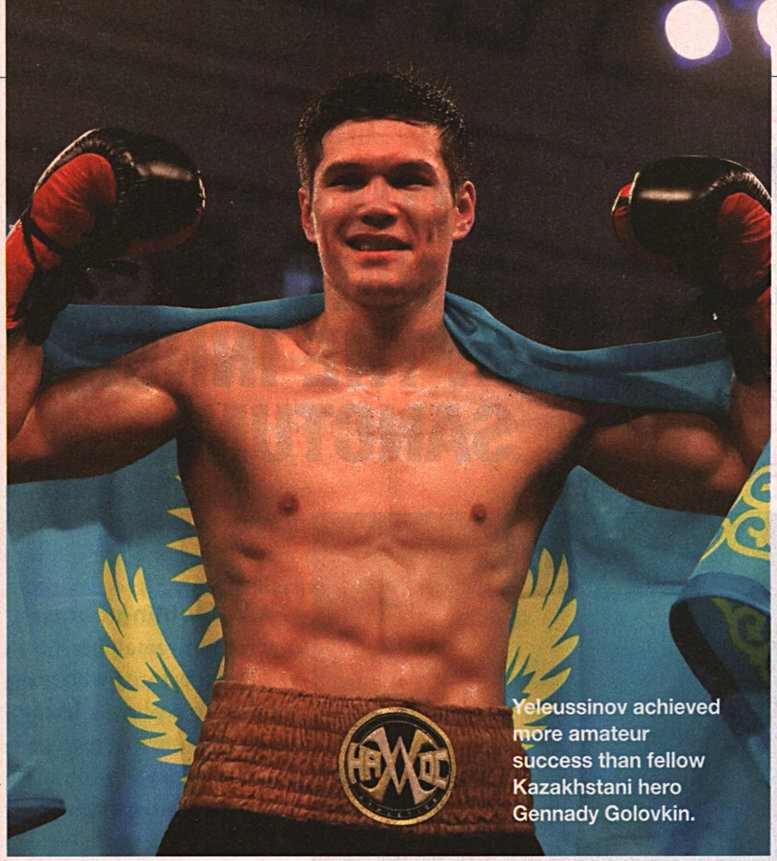
Bernard Hopkins is the former undisputed middleweight champion and former light heavyweight champion.

ROUND 1

FIGHTER OF THE MONTH ★ NEW FACES ★ AND MORE!

CANELO ALVAREZ

Canelo Alvarez needed more than a victory against Gennady Golovkin in the anticipated sequel to their controversial draw; the 28-year-old star needed a career-best performance to restore his credibility among fans and his stature within the sport. Alvarez, whose reputation took a hit following his clenbuterol scandal and subsequent suspension earlier in the year, delivered on September 15, and he did so on Team GGG's terms. There was no lateral movement or retreating to the ropes from the Guadalajara native in the rematch-turned-grudge match, just hard punching (especially to the body) and command of the ring center, which was enough to earn a majority decision in a Fight of the Year candidate. Golovkin, the busier of the two, boxed well enough to earn a draw or a close nod in the eyes of many observers, but unlike their first bout, nobody (including GGG's trainer Abel Sanchez) could accuse Alvarez of not fighting "Mexican Style." RING



Yeleussinov achieved more amateur success than fellow Kazakhstani hero Gennady Golovkin.

NEW FACES

DANIYAR YELEUSSINOV

Prior to 2018, Daniyar Yeleussinov was recognized as one of the best unpaid fighters in the world. He graduated earlier this year after signing with influential promoter Matchroom, making his pro debut on the undercard of stablemate Daniel Jacobs' fight with Maciej Sulecki at Barclays Center in Brooklyn, New York.

"In the amateurs I achieved all my goals," Yeleussinov told The Ring through manager Ziya Aliyev. "I was Asian Games champion twice, world champion and Olympic gold medalist. I did everything in the amateurs, and that's why it didn't make any sense to stay there any longer. I was there a long time. That's why I decided to change it and test myself as a professional. I have new goals here now."

Yeleussinov grew up in Berezino, a small town in western Kazakhstan on the Russian border, as the youngest of three children in a middle-class family. He began boxing when he was 7 and had entered his first tournament by the time he was 9, following in brother Dauren's footsteps.

He won his first 101 amateur contests and estimates he had in the region of 280 fights overall, with only 14 or 15 losses.

At the 2016 Olympics in Rio, Yeleussinov upheld his country's stranglehold on the welterweight division (152 pounds) by becoming their fourth consecutive fighter to win gold – after Bakhtiyar Artayev in 2004, Bakhyt Sarsekbayev in 2008 and Serik Sapiyev in 2012.

"When you're standing there (on the podium), you understand this is the top: 'I'm the Olympic champion, this is the highest level.' You can't achieve more than that. It's hard to explain what you feel at that time, but definitely you understand this is a different level and you are on top."

Clearly he still saw mountains to climb. It should be noted that of the four welterweight Olympic gold medalists from Kazakhstan, Yeleussinov is the only one to turn pro – and so far, so good. The 27-year-old southpaw moved to 3-0 (1 knockout) in early August, and the working plan is to fight twice more in 2018, according to his manager.

"His October 6 fight will be eight rounds, then another eight-rounder on November 24," said Aliyev. "And five times next year."

Yeleussinov now trains in South Florida under former two-weight titleholder John David Jackson, who says that the Kazakhstani is still a work in progress, despite the amateur experience.

"The transition is slow, but it's not a bad transition," explained Jackson. "He's willing to try to do what I'm trying to show him to perfect his craft.

"He's a good fighter. He's an Olympic gold medalist – that adds to his repertoire of boxing. He listens, and that makes my job easier. And he's willing to learn and better himself as a fighter. And I think in the long run he'll be one helluva fighter in the professional ranks of boxing."

Yeleussinov also feels he is adapting well to the rigors of the professional game, and his plans have shifted accordingly.

"Everything is new for me in professional boxing, and preparation is different from the amateurs. Everything is different," he said. "Here, you prepare yourself for the one fight.

"Some people dream about being world champion in several divisions. It's not easy, but I'm thinking first to grab all the belts from one division and be absolute champion of the world at welterweight. After that, we can think about changing divisions."

Jackson sees the potential but knows that professional success involves more than just a good record.

"He's not bad now, but he'll be better than he probably even realizes," said the trainer. "He has great reflexes, he has decent power and he's willing to learn to become a better all-around fighter.

"He has to be able to sit down on the punches more and be more exciting to the fans and more appealing – score more knockouts. To win by points is great, but especially in America they love knockouts, so I think his fan base will grow tenfold once he begins knocking guys out consistently or stopping them real dramatically.

"It's going to take time for him to make the transition from the amateur to a good pro, and once he does that and I correct a few of his flaws, he should go far in boxing."

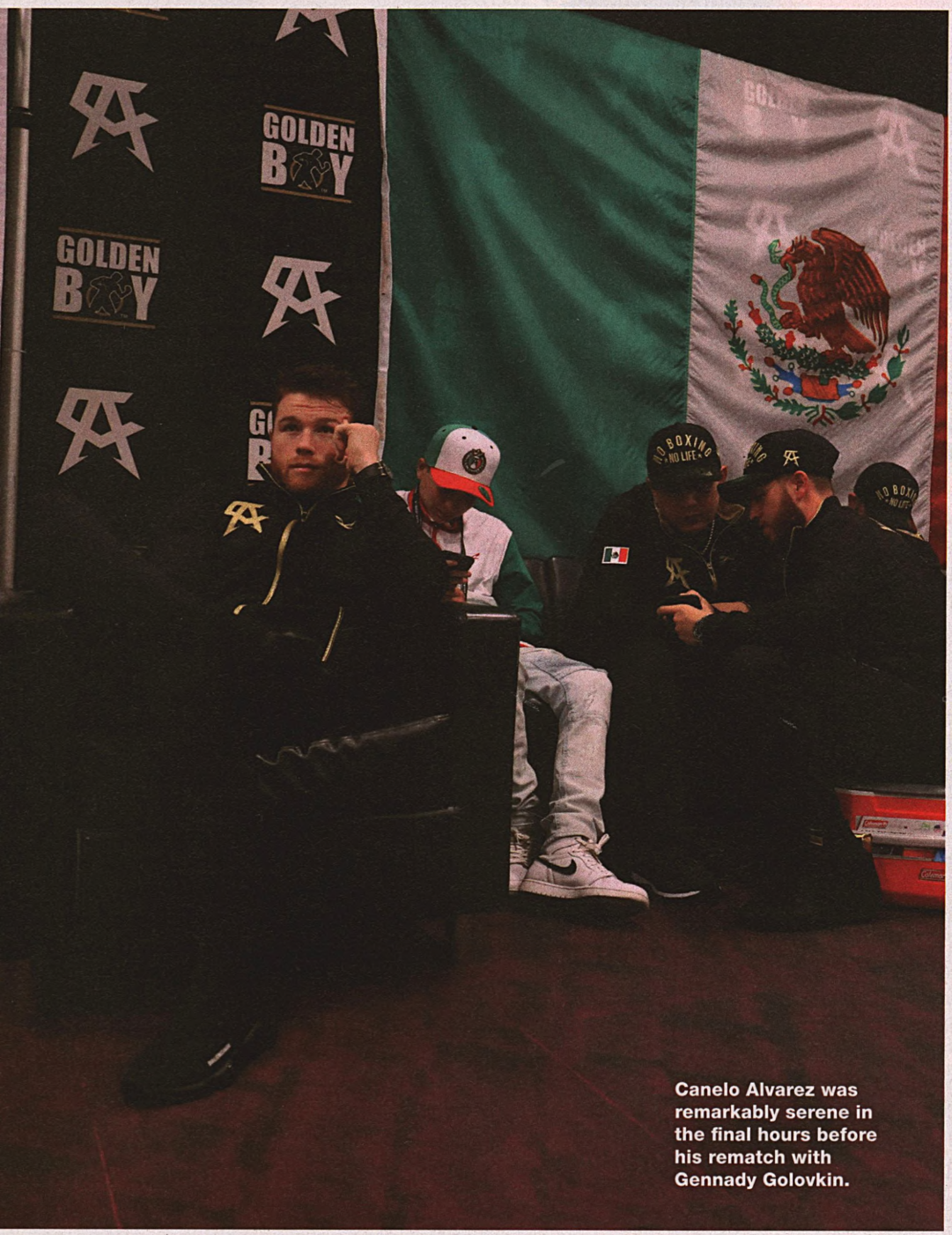
Yeleussinov has already proven he's capable of that much. Like countryman Gennady Golovkin, he is extremely popular in his homeland and has more than 400,000 followers on Instagram alone. If Yeleussinov can have the same impact on the professional side of the sport that he did in the amateur ranks, he's going to be one of the stars of the next decade in boxing.

Questions and/or comments can be sent to Anson at elraincoat@live.co.uk and you can follow him on Twitter @AnsonWainwright.

JABS AND STRAIGHT WRITES

BY THOMAS HAUSER

WITH CANELO ALVAREZ IN THE INNER SANCTUM



Canelo Alvarez was remarkably serene in the final hours before his rematch with Gennady Golovkin.

A.J. Liebling once wrote of rematches, "The spectator who goes twice to a play he likes is pretty sure of getting what he pays for on his second visit, especially if the cast is unchanged. This is not true of the sweet science."

Fans who attended the September 15 rematch between Canelo Alvarez and Gennady Golovkin got what they paid for. LeBron James, who was sitting at ringside, later tweeted, "One of the best fights I've ever seen! Ultimate competitors in @Canelo and @GGGBoxing! Salute to both of you. Could watch y'all fight any day."

Canelo arrived at Dressing Room #1 at the T-Mobile Arena on Saturday night at 5:10 p.m. A five-by-ten-foot Mexican flag hung on the wall opposite a large flat-screen television monitor.

Two hours earlier, a seven-man film crew that works for Canelo had set up in the room. In recent years, the crew has been gathering material for

a documentary about Alvarez's life. They also feed content to Canelo's 3.6 million Instagram followers, his 1.3 million Twitter followers and the 2.9 million people in his Facebook community. The cameras recorded his arrival in the dressing room with Chepo and Eddy Reynoso.

Canelo sat on a black imitation-leather armchair to the left of the flag. HBO production coordinator Tami Cotel came in and repositioned him for a pre-fight interview with Max Kellerman. When it was done, he returned to the chair and, arms crossed across his chest, began watching the first pay-per-view bout of the evening – Roman Gonzalez vs. Moises Fuentes – on the TV monitor. Gonzalez knocked Fuentes unconscious in Round 5. Canelo nodded in acknowledgment.

Chepo Reynoso began folding gauze into pads for his fighter's fists. When each pad was ready, he showed it to a Nevada Athletic Commission inspector for approval before bringing it to Canelo to ensure that it fit comfortably.

David Lemieux vs. Gary "Spike" O'Sullivan – the second televised bout of the evening – began. The winner would be on the short list of prospective opponents for Alvarez. Canelo turned his body slightly to the right in his chair, crossed his right leg over his left thigh and studied the action with his right hand pressed against his chin. The fight didn't last long. Lemieux KO'd O'Sullivan two minutes, 44 seconds into Round 1.

Two fights. Two reminders of how quickly and brutally a fight can end.

Soft Latin music began playing in the background.

The TV monitor showed Gennady Golovkin arriving at T-Mobile Arena. Again, Canelo nodded.

Several sponsor representatives entered. Alvarez rose to greet them and posed for photos before returning to his chair. Video footage from his first fight against Golovkin began to play on the monitor. Canelo watched impassively, chatting occasionally with Diego Alejandro Gonzalez (the son of Golden Boy public relations director Ramiro Gonzalez).

At 6:05, clad in a tuxedo, Julio Cesar Chavez came in to conduct an interview for Mexican television. That was followed by a visit from Nevada Athletic Commission executive director Bob Bennett, who arrived with several commission dignitaries and referee Benjy Esteves, who gave Canelo his pre-fight instructions.

Golden Boy publicist Gabriel Rivas and matchmaker Robert Diaz appeared from time to time to attend to various matters.

The video of Canelo-Golovkin I ended.

More well-wishers, family members and friends came and went. Canelo rose from his chair to greet each one with a welcoming smile and embrace.

At 6:20, Canelo's girlfriend came into the room with his youngest daughter, an adorable toddler named Maria Fernanda Alvarez. Canelo took his daughter in his arms and sat with her on his lap.

"What a beautiful girl," he murmured.

He lifted her arms up and down while nuzzling her cheek and saying "Papa! Papa!" over and over again in a sing-song voice.

Maria rested comfortably in her father's arms. Then Canelo rose from his chair and walked her around the room on her unsteady legs, holding both of her arms above her head from behind.

He looked like a man playing at home with his daughter, not a warrior readying for war.

Jaime Munguia vs. Brandon Cook – the third fight on the pay-per-view telecast – began. It was over in three rounds. Canelo put his daughter down and began stretching with Eddy Reynoso, his first boxing-related exercise of the evening.

Miguel Cotto, who Alvarez defeated in 2015 to win his first middleweight belt, came in, hugged Canelo, shook hands with Eddy and chatted for several minutes with Chepo.

There was more stretching.

At seven o'clock, Eddy began wrapping Canelo's hands with a representative of Golovkin's camp looking on. Right hand first, then the left.

At 7:15, inspectors Alex Ybarra, Francisco Soto and Charvez Foger cleared the room of camera crews, family members and friends. In 45 minutes, Canelo would leave his sanctuary for the ring.

Tami Cotel returned with the request that Canelo sit for a brief interview for HBO social media.

"I'm sorry," Robert Diaz told her. "This isn't a television show now. He has to get ready for a fight."

Canelo put on a protective cup and black trunks with gold trim. Eddy applied Vaseline to his face. There was more stretching followed by a brief interlude of shadowboxing.

Eddy gloved Canelo up.

There was some padwork.

Cotel returned. "You walk in 12 minutes," she instructed.

Chepo draped a black serape emblazoned with a Mexican-flag emblem over Canelo's shoulders.

The dressing room had been remarkably quiet from start to finish. Now only the soft Latin music could be heard.

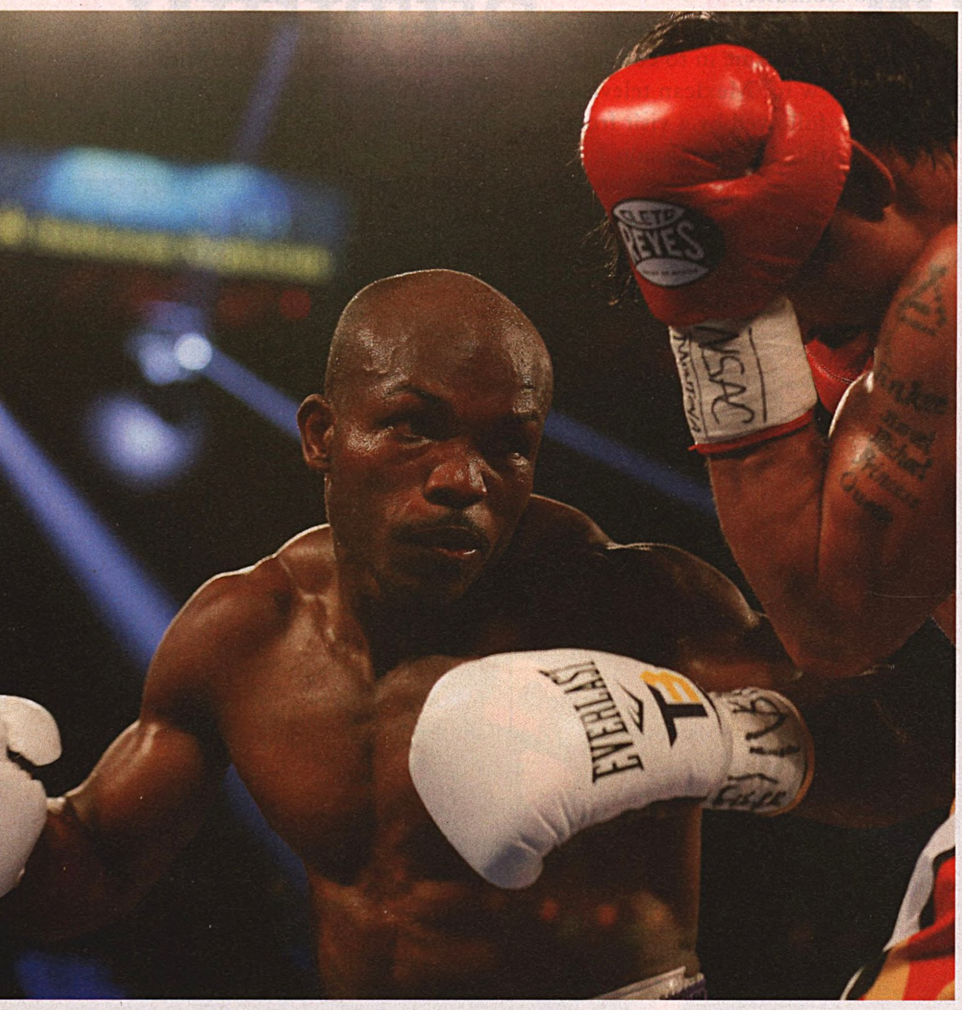
Canelo began singing in tune with the music. A love song.

He looked like a boy in a man's world.

Thomas Hauser can be reached by email at thauser@rcn.com. His most recent book – Protect Yourself at All Times – was published thus autumn by the University of Arkansas Press. In 2004, the Boxing Writers Association of America honored Hauser with the Nat Fleischer Award for career excellence in boxing journalism.

BEST I FACED

BY ANSON WAINWRIGHT



TIM BRADLEY

Tim Bradley was never the most skilled, quickest or hardest-punching fighter. But when you put everything together, he was a card-carrying member of boxing's elite during a 12-year career, winning five world titles in two weight classes.

Bradley, who was born and raised in the Palm Springs area of the Southern California desert, was introduced to boxing when he was 10 years old. He was a solid amateur, taking part in 140 bouts before turning pro in the summer of 2004 amid little fanfare.

He fought about every two months, mostly off-TV, on Thompson Boxing club shows until May 2008, when he was given the opportunity to cross the Atlantic and face British junior welterweight titleholder Junior Witter, who was making the third defense of his WBC belt.

The two fought on near-even terms until "Desert Storm" dropped Witter in the sixth round and won most of the remaining rounds to claim the title.

"Beating Junior Witter in his hometown in front of 10,000 people … it changed my life," Bradley told The Ring. "I finally got to the point where I could start making some real money in the sport. I fought Junior Witter for $45,000 – that's nothing compared to what guys are fighting for now for the title."

He added the WBO belt by getting off the canvas in the first round to beat Kendall Holt and made five defenses at 140 pounds, including wins against Lamont Peterson, Devon Alexander and Joel Casamayor.

In June 2012, he stepped up to welterweight and shocked Manny Pacquiao, winning a controversial split decision. The two would meet twice more, with Pacquiao gaining a measure of revenge by winning both times.

Cast as a boxing pariah after the first Pacquiao fight, Bradley took his frustration into the ring against grizzled brawler Ruslan Provodnikov and, counter to his usual conservative style, engaged in an all-out slugfest and won a unanimous decision. It was The Ring's 2013 Fight of the Year.

"I was in a state of mind where I had to revamp my career," he explained. "I had to show the world that I'm a true fighter, that I'm willing to die in this ring to gain respect from the fans and anyone who watched that night."

In his next fight, Bradley expertly outpointed Juan Manuel Marquez in what he says was his best

Bradley, the quintessential overachiever and perennial underdog, defied the odds throughout his Hall of Fame-worthy career.

performance.

"I fought pretty much the perfect fight, in my opinion," Bradley said. "I executed the game plan. Everything was flowing."

Next up was the Pacquiao rematch. Bradley was soundly outpointed by the Filipino hero, but he rebounded from the first loss of his career by regaining the WBO 147-pound strap (by defeating Jessie Vargas) – only to lose it again to Pacquiao.

Bradley (33-2-1, 13 knockouts) decided to retire 18 months after their rubber match, in the summer of 2017.

"I've accomplished more than I should have in the sport of boxing," he said. "I was hungry. I was determined."

Bradley, now 35, lives with his wife and former manager, Monica, in Palm Springs with their five children. They own two restaurants called Haus of Poké. Bradley remains involved in boxing as a color commentator for ESPN.

He graciously took time to speak to The Ring about the best he fought in 10 key categories.

BEST JAB

Kendall Holt: Oh man, there's a couple of 'em. Kendall Holt had a nice, strong, crisp jab. It was a heavy jab. Also Jessie Vargas had a nice, strong, crisp jab. Miguel Vazquez had a really good, disciplined jab – kept me off balance a lot, kept me from coming in on him. I would have to say Kendall Holt. It felt like you were getting hit with a right hand.

BEST DEFENSE

Juan Manuel Marquez: I have to say Marquez or Pacquiao. Pacquiao was tough to hit, but I would think Marquez was a little bit more difficult, because my approach had to be "commit, don't get hit and then commit again." It was very hard; Marquez was one of the best counterpunchers in the game. Anytime you would do something or throw a punch, he would throw one right back to counter, every single time. I would say Marquez was probably the most difficult fighter to hit without getting hit back.

FASTEST HANDS

Manny Pacquiao: Manny Pacquiao, hands down, had the fastest hands that I've ever been in the ring with. Devon (Alexander) had fast hands, but I'd have to say Manny Pacquiao. Explosion, speed, power, accuracy – the total package.

BEST FOOTWORK

Pacquiao: His footwork was phenomenal. He hits you, steps around you, hits you again. Honestly, I never found anyone who had such quick hands and feet, that power, endurance and a lot of experience. The second guy would be Junior Witter, who was awkwardly clever, who could switch on a dime, could move as he's punching from orthodox to southpaw and attack you. Witter had some crazy footwork.

BEST CHIN

Ruslan Provodnikov: There's a lot of guys that I hit that were tough. Devon Alexander had a really good chin; I hit him with some hard shots. Vargas had a really good chin; hit him with some hellacious shots and he took them well. Provodnikov, that boy could take 'em – really good chin. He made me feel like I wasn't doing anything to him. I hit him with the kitchen sink, he kept coming, kept laughing at me. I'd have to say that guy. (laughs)

SMARTEST

Pacquiao: Marquez is one of those guys that is super-clever; he set me up for two uppercuts in the first round. Pacquiao is really good with the setup too. I'd gravitate to Pacquiao; he's very difficult to hit. Every now and again you might get one shot, maybe two, but he's very difficult to hit cleanly because of his footwork.

STRONGEST

Provodnikov: I think he was the strongest guy I ever faced. As far as brute strength, his body weight, his hands were heavy … he was a very strong guy.

BEST PUNCHER

Provodnikov: The best puncher was Provodnikov. It was like being hit in the face with a sledgehammer. Pacquiao's power is more like an electrical current – you feel a wave of shock. When Provodnikov hits you, you're in la-la land. You're dancing on an island. You're trying to get your legs back and get your defenses, because you don't want to get hit by another shot from this guy. Your legs go to jelly. (laughs) You have no control over your body; you're trying to will yourself out of that hell you're in.

BOXING SKILLS

Lamont Peterson: Lamont Peterson had some skills. I remember him from the amateurs. Pacquiao, Marquez … Lamont I would have to say was skillful because he was the total package: He had a decent punch, he was longer than I was, reach and taller, strong as hell, he can fight on the inside and box on the outside.

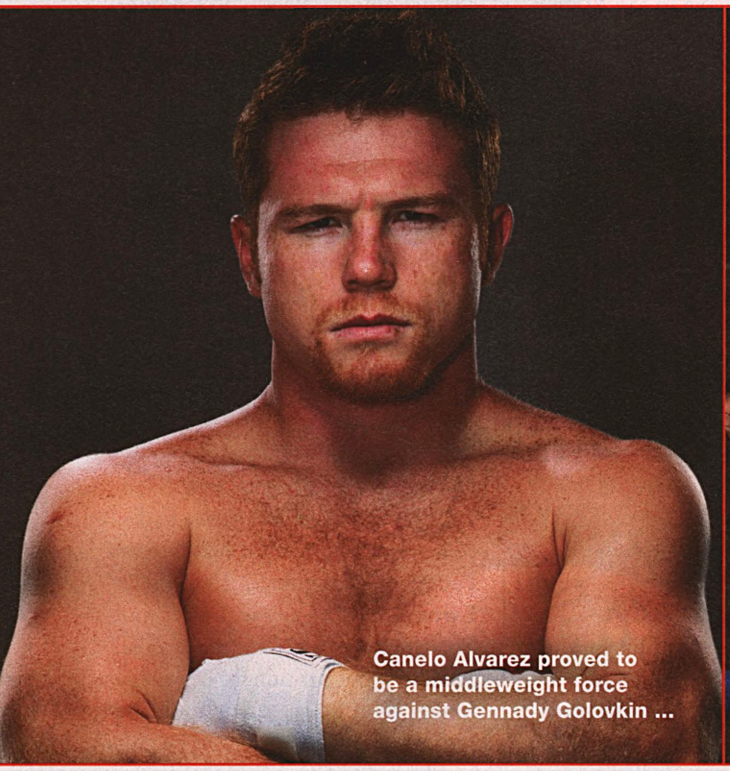
BEST OVERALL

Pacquiao: It's very rare to see a guy move up that many weight classes and still hold onto his power, and his ability got better as he went up in weight. It's rare you have a guy with all these qualities. Character, his background – that's why he has a certain tenacity – speed he has, foot speed, power that he has. And he's beating all of Mexico – trilogies with a lot of these guys. And he has experience. Pacquiao is by far the best guy I've been in a ring with, and second would have to be Marquez.

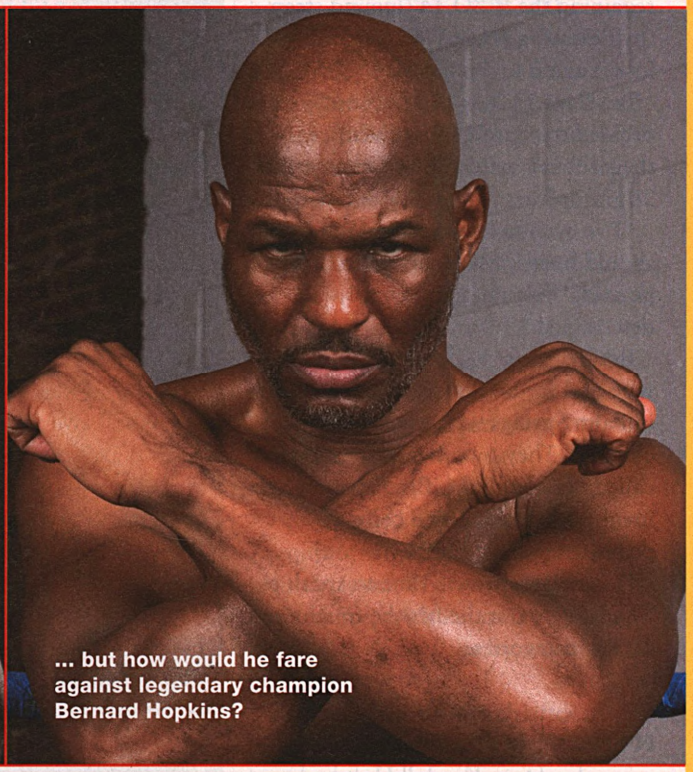
Questions and/or comments can be sent to Anson at elraincoat@live.co.uk and you can follow him on Twitter @AnsonWainwright.

FIGHTS OF FANTASY

BY TOM GRAY



Canelo Alvarez proved to be a middleweight force against Gennady Golovkin ...



... but how would he fare against legendary champion Bernard Hopkins?

CANELO ALVAREZ VS. BERNARD HOPKINS

THREE EXPERTS – A FIGHTER, A TRAINER AND A MEDIA MEMBER – TELL YOU HOW A MYTHICAL MATCHUP WOULD PLAY OUT

Yes, even fighters and their promoters can settle differences in a fantasy matchup.

Canelo Alvarez just secured a career-defining victory by outpointing Gennady Golovkin in their superfight rematch. It was a thrilling battle that could have gone either way, and the debate rages on in terms of the scoring. However, one thing is indisputable: Alvarez is an authentic middleweight force; those 155-pound catchweight bouts are a thing of the past. The Mexican star stood his ground against the fearsome Golovkin over 12 rounds, absorbing his best and firing back with terrific work of his own.

Golovkin, previously unbeaten through 39 fights over 12 years, had already established himself as a great middleweight, and his story is likely to have several more chapters. But make no mistake; Alvarez is now the world's premier 160-pounder, and the events of September 15, 2018, were historically significant for the division. What's more, at just 28 years old, the new Ring, WBA and WBC champion is only just entering his physical prime.

But how would Alvarez have fared against the brilliant version of Bernard Hopkins who schooled Felix Trinidad in September 2001?

From 1995 to 2004, Hopkins won every available championship at 160 pounds to emerge as the undisputed king. A master boxer with impeccable craft, the teak-tough Philadelphia warrior could box on the outside, go to war on the inside and he knew every trick in the book. Hopkins' versatility and ring generalship were matched only by his dedication and longevity. He made an incredible 19 successful defenses (20 counting the no-contest result of his first bout with Robert Allen), wiping out an era of middleweights before moving on to light heavyweight.

Is it too soon for Alvarez, or will his youth and explosiveness trouble one of the division's all-time greats? The Ring asked three experts for their take:

Tom Gray is Associate Editor for The Ring. Follow him on Twitter: @Tom_Gray_Boxing

ALVAREZ ★ TALE OF THE TAPE ★ HOPKINS

MIDDLEWEIGHT

ALVAREZ		HOPKINS
28	AGE	36
50-1-2 (34 KOS)	RECORD	39-2-1 (28 KOS)
64 PERCENT	KO PERCENTAGE	72 PERCENT
ORTHODOX	STANCE	ORTHODOX
5 FEET 8 INCHES	HEIGHT	6 FEET 1 INCH
70½ INCHES	REACH	75 INCHES

TRAINER

Joe Gallagher

THE RING TRAINER OF THE YEAR 2015

Canelo's attitude, his mindset, his desire and his shot selection have been impressive in the Golovkin fights. Ironically, I thought Canelo just about edged the first fight and Golovkin nicked the rematch. A fight with Hopkins is a hard one to call, because Hopkins was the same all the way through a fight, a proper workman who had a game plan and knew how to defend well. He also knew how to win a decision and he was a very hard man, but so is Canelo, and that's what he's proving right now. It would be easy to pick Hopkins because of his ring craft, but I think Canelo's speed of hand and variety would be the difference. Like Hopkins, Canelo can adapt; he can box off the back foot, or he can take stand in the middle of the ring. Hopkins was huge at 160 pounds and he took the right fights at the right time, but look at Canelo's resume – he's been in with everyone and his only loss is to Floyd Mayweather, who beat him on experience. You don't see Floyd crying out for that rematch now, do you? I think Hopkins would be like Marvelous Marvin Hagler in this fight and Canelo would be Sugar Ray Leonard, winning a split decision with the faster and more eye-catching work.

Prediction: ALVAREZ

FIGHTER

Darren Barker

FORMER IBF MIDDLEWEIGHT TITLEHOLDER

Canelo's handspeed is phenomenal, and he's brought that up through the weights. He's so eye-catching when he lets his hands go, and the variation – jab to the head, jab to the body, hooks, straight back hands – he's got a full repertoire of punches. Canelo did get caught by Golovkin but, overall, his defense is very good and he can ride a shot really well. You don't get to where he is in boxing if you don't have a bit of everything, and he has. The thing with Hopkins is he had natural size; he was tall, and I just think he would be able to outfox Canelo. There is the possibility that he could get outworked but, in terms of stealing rounds, there was no one better than Hopkins. He knew how to keep an opponent at range, he knew when to attack and he had the total package in terms of ring craft. It's easy to forgot how good he was in his middleweight prime, but Hopkins was some fighter. Don't get me wrong, it's an intriguing matchup and you would be on the edge of your seat from the first bell. I just think Hopkins would outsmart Canelo over 12 rounds. There would be a lot of blood, and Hopkins' back hand, followed by the head, would be a key punch.

Prediction: HOPKINS

MEDIA

Tris Dixon

BOXING WRITER

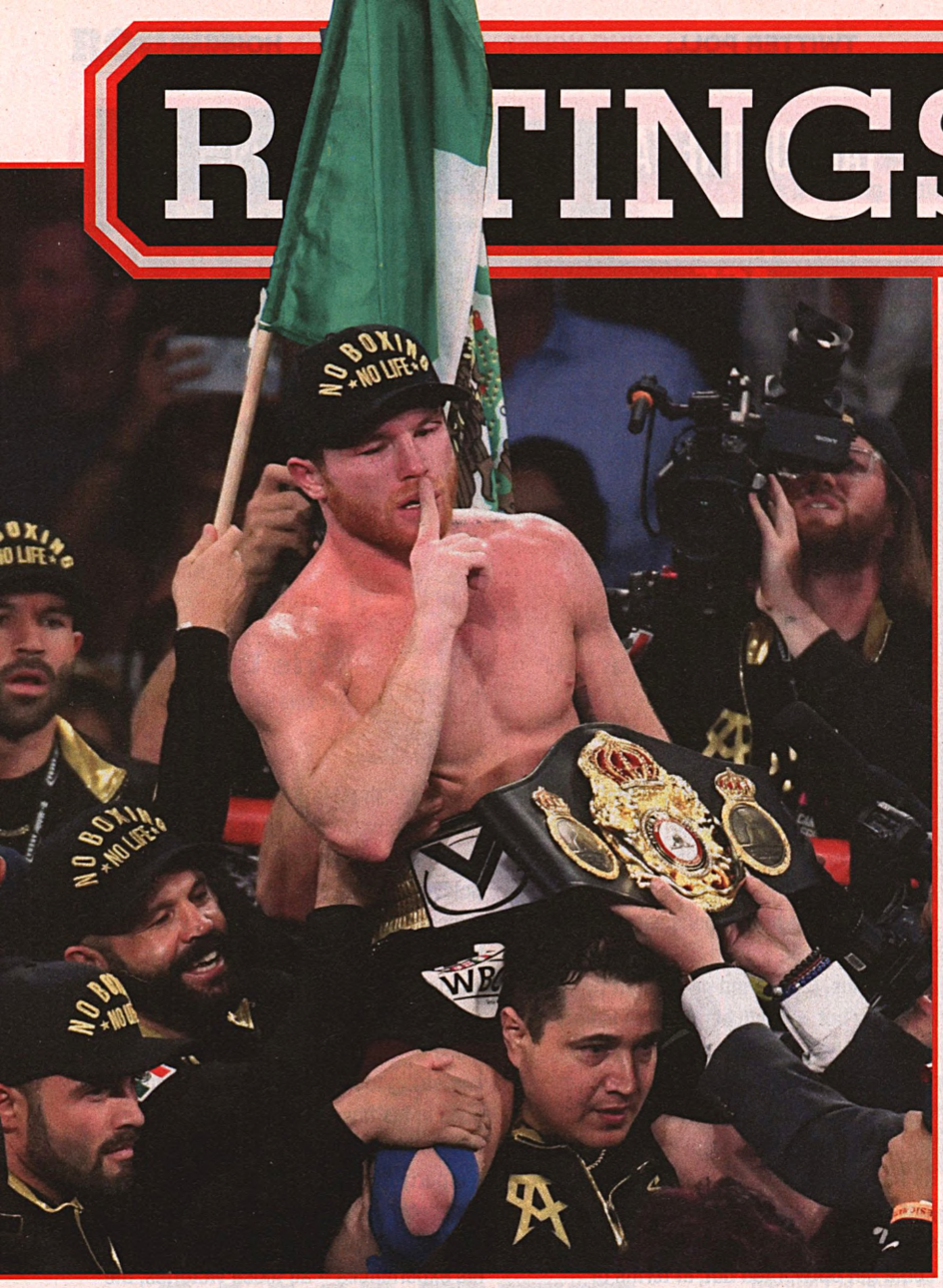
One of the most impressive things about Canelo at middleweight is how sturdy his chin has been over 24 rounds with Golovkin, who we know is a rock-hard puncher. Also his eye-catching variety; he's looked for the right shots and he's changed things up. In the first fight he moved around, whereas in the rematch he stood in the pocket. Canelo has more than one string to his bow, and that definitely goes in his favor. With Hopkins, I was at the Trinidad fight, which was his coming out party at middleweight, and there was nothing he couldn't do that night. He had an answer for everything, and all his experiences – all those victories, the loss to Roy Jones, everything that he'd learned from (trainer) Bouie Fischer in the hard Philly gyms – came together for one big payoff. Trinidad just couldn't do a thing. Hopkins was so dominant, and he didn't lose that momentum for many years. He improved with age, became such a well-rounded fighter, and it was that victory which validated everything he thought he was and deserved to be. I think Canelo could hang with that version of Hopkins, but I don't think he could beat him. Golovkin didn't have a Plan B in the rematch, but Hopkins brought Plans B, C and D. I think he wins the fight on points.

Prediction: HOPKINS

(Hopkins' tale of the tape statistics are pre-Trinidad, September 2001)

RATINGS

POUND FOR POUND ★ RATINGS ANALYSIS ★ THE RING RATINGS



Shhhhhh ... Try to keep this news under your hat ... Canelo Alvarez is back in the ratings as Ring middleweight champ and No. 3 on the pound-for-pound list.

POUND FOR POUND

1 **VASILIY LOMACHENKO**
Ukraine • 11-1-0 (9 KOs)

2 **TERENCE CRAWFORD**
U.S. • 33-0-0 (24 KOs)

3 **CANELO ALVAREZ**
Mexico • 50-1-2 (34 KOs)

4 **GENNADY GOLOVKIN**
Kazakhstan • 38-1-1 (34 KOs)

5 **ALEKSANDR USYK**
Ukraine • 15-0-0 (11 KOs)

6 **MIKEY GARCIA**
U.S. • 39-0-0 (30 KOs)

7 **NAOYA INOUE**
Japan • 16-0-0 (14 KOs)

8 **SRISAKET SOR RUNGVISAI**
Thailand • 46-4-1 (41 KOs)

9 **ERROL SPENCE JR.**
U.S. • 24-0-0 (21 KOs)

10 **DONNIE NIETES**
Philippines • 41-1-5 (23 KOs)

POUND FOR POUND: The Gennady Golovkin-Canelo Alvarez rematch was perhaps even more thrilling than the first fight – and still controversial to some – but produced a "W" this time, so Gennady Golovkin was kicked off his perch and lowered to No. 4, Canelo returned from his suspension to take the No. 3 spot and Vasiliy Lomachenko slid into the throne. Terence Crawford also gained a position and moved to No. 2 while Leo Santa Cruz (No. 10 last month) was pushed out.

HEAVYWEIGHTS: Tyson Fury's shutout win over Francesco Pianeta (unrated) was short of exquisite, but the rusty giant now has two comeback wins in the bank and – though he has much to prove – still represents a legitimate threat to the top dogs. He was raised from No. 10 to No. 7. Adam Kownacki gained a notch, moving to No. 9 after narrowly winning a very entertaining scrap with Charles Martin (unrated).

CRUISERWEIGHTS: No change.

LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHTS: No change.

SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHTS: No change.

MIDDLEWEIGHTS: With his majority decision over Golovkin, Canelo took possession of the vacant Ring championship along with the WBA and WBC titles. Golovkin stayed put at No. 1. Earlier that night, David Lemieux flattened Spike O'Sullivan (No. 10 at the time) in the first round; the Canadian went from No. 8 to No. 7 and the mustachioed O'Sullivan was replaced at No. 10 by Maciej Sulecki.

JUNIOR MIDDLEWEIGHTS: No change.

WELTERWEIGHTS: No change.

JUNIOR WELTERWEIGHTS: No change.

LIGHTWEIGHTS: Jose Pedraza rose from No. 10 to No. 4 after capping his title-grabbing unanimous decision with a knockdown of Ray Beltran, who slipped from No. 3 to No. 7.

Heavyweight hopeful Adam Kownacki (left) scored an entertaining 10-round decision over former beltholder Charles Martin on the Garcia-Porter undercard.

JUNIOR LIGHTWEIGHTS: No change.

FEATHERWEIGHTS: No change.

JUNIOR FEATHERWEIGHTS: TJ Doheny (unrated last month) traveled from Australia to Japan to face incumbent titleholder Ryosuke Iwasa (No. 7 at the time) and gutted out a late-round fade to win the belt by unanimous decision. Doheny entered the list at No. 7 and Iwasa fell to the brink at No. 10. The following week, Hidenori Otake (unrated) only had to endure two minutes of abuse from Isaac Dogboe before the referee stepped in, after which Dogboe (No. 2 last month) jumped over Guillermo Rigondeaux to take his well-earned place atop the division.

BANTAMWEIGHTS: No change.

JUNIOR BANTAMWEIGHTS: No. 10-rated Wenfeng Ge dropped to flyweight, thus making room for Akira Yaegashi, who solidified his move from 108 pounds with a seventh-round stoppage of Hirofumi Mukai (unrated). Then, the third installment of "Superfly" left a shakeup in its wake: The new arrivals were Donnie Nietes, who came in at No. 7 after a much-disputed draw with a surprisingly resilient Aston Palicte (who entered at No. 9), and Kazuto Ioka, who stormed back from a 16½-month layoff to decisively outpoint McWilliams Arroyo. Carlos Cuadras, Rex Tso and Yaegashi were removed to make room, and Arroyo was lowered from No. 6 to No. 10.

FLYWEIGHTS: Cristofer Rosales retained the WBC title and was lifted from No. 5 to No. 4 after a vicious right to the liver – yes, right – knocked out Paddy Barnes (unrated) in Round 4. Ge, who started his career at 122 and has steadily boiled down in weight, was installed at No. 10, replacing Muhammad Waseem, after winning a unanimous decision over Ivan Soriano (unrated).

JUNIOR FLYWEIGHTS: Yaegashi (No. 8 last month) has been fighting at 115, so he was removed and draw-magnet (five of them in 18 fights) Edward Heno entered at No. 10. Pedro Guevara (No. 5 last month) then left the division to move up and Randy Petalcorin took the bottom slot.

STRAWWEIGHTS: After the discovery of cerebral hemorrhaging following his loss to Vic Saludar in mid-July, Ryuya Yamanaka's license was revoked and he announced his retirement. He vacated the No. 8 spot, which made room for South African Deejay Kriel at No. 10.

HEAVYWEIGHTS
WEIGHT UNLIMITED

- **C (VACANT)**
- **1 ANTHONY JOSHUA** U.K. • 21-0-0 (20 KOs)
- **2 DEONTAY WILDER** U.S. • 40-0-0 (39 KOs)
- **3 ALEXANDER POVETKIN** Russia • 34-1-0 (24 KOs)
- **4 LUIS ORTIZ** Cuba • 29-1-0 (25 KOs)
- **5 DILLIAN WHYTE** U.K. • 24-1-0 (17 KOs)
- **6 JOSEPH PARKER** New Zealand • 24-2-0 (18 KOs)
- **7 TYSON FURY** U.K. • 27-0-0 (19 KOs)
- **8 DOMINIC BREAZEALE** U.S. • 19-1-0 (17 KOs)
- **9 ADAM KOWNACKI** U.S. • 18-0-0 (14 KOs)
- **10 JARRELL MILLER** U.S. • 21-0-1 (18 KOs)

CRUISERWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 200 LBS

- **C ALEKSANDR USYK** Ukraine • 15-0-0 (11 KOs)
- **1 MAIRIS BRIEDIS** Latvia • 24-1-0 (18 KOs)
- **2 MURAT GASSIEV** Russia • 26-1-0 (19 KOs)
- **3 DENIS LEBEDEV** Russia • 31-2-0 (23 KOs)
- **4 YUNIER DORTICOS** Cuba • 22-1-0 (21 KOs)
- **5 KRZYSZTOF GLOWACKI** Poland • 30-1-0 (19 KOs)
- **6 MAKSIM VLASOV** Russia • 42-2-0 (25 KOs)
- **7 KEVIN LERENA** S. Africa • 21-1-0 (9 KOs)
- **8 ANDREW TABITI** U.S. • 16-0-0 (13 KOs)
- **9 ILUNGA MAKABU** Congo • 22-2-0 (21 KOs)
- **10 CONSTANTIN BEJENARU** Moldova • 13-0-0 (3 KOs)

LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 175 LBS

- **C (VACANT)**
- **1 ELEIDER ALVAREZ** Colombia • 24-0-0 (12 KOs)
- **2 DMITRY BIVOL** Russia • 14-0-0 (11 KOs)
- **3 ADONIS STEVENSON** Canada • 29-1-1 (24 KOs)
- **4 BADOU JACK** Sweden • 22-1-3 (13 KOs)
- **5 SERGEY KOVALEV** Russia • 32-3-1 (28 KOs)
- **6 OLEKSANDR GVOZDYK** Ukraine • 15-0-0 (12 KOs)
- **7 ARTUR BETERBIEV** Russia • 12-0-0 (12 KOs)
- **8 SULLIVAN BARRERA** Cuba • 21-2-0 (14 KOs)
- **9 MARCUS BROWNE** U.S. • 22-0-0 (16 KOs)
- **10 JOE SMITH JR.** U.S. • 24-2-0 (20 KOs)

SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 168 LBS

- **C (VACANT)**
- **1 GEORGE GROVES** U.K. • 28-3-0 (20 KOs)
- **2 GILBERTO RAMIREZ** Mexico • 38-0-0 (25 KOs)
- **3 CALLUM SMITH** U.K. • 24-0-0 (17 KOs)
- **4 DAVID BENAVIDEZ** U.S. • 20-0-0 (17 KOs)
- **5 JOSE UZCATEGUI** Venezuela • 27-2-0 (23 KOs)
- **6 JAMES DEGALE** U.K. • 24-2-1 (14 KOs)
- **7 ANTHONY DIRRELL** U.S. • 32-1-1 (24 KOs)
- **8 CALEB TRUAX** U.S. • 30-4-2 (19 KOs)
- **9 CHRIS EUBANK JR.** U.K. • 26-2-0 (20 KOs)
- **10 ROCKY FIELDING** U.K. • 27-1-0 (15 KOs)

RATINGS

Through fights of September 16, 2018

MIDDLEWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 160 LBS

- **C CANELO ALVAREZ** Mexico • 50-1-2 (34 KOs)
- **1 GENNADY GOLOVKIN** Kaz. • 38-1-1 (34 KOs)
- **2 DANIEL JACOBS** U.S. • 34-2-0 (29 KOs)
- **3 BILLY JOE SAUNDERS** U.K. • 26-0-0 (12 KOs)
- **4 SERGIY DEREVYANCHENKO** Ukraine • 12-0-0 (10 KOs)
- **5 JERMALL CHARLO** U.S. • 27-0-0 (21 KOs)
- **6 RYOTA MURATA** Japan • 14-1-0 (11 KOs)
- **7 DAVID LEMIEUX** Canada • 40-4-0 (34 KOs)
- **8 DEMETRIUS ANDRADE** U.S. • 25-0-0 (16 KOs)
- **9 HASSAN N'DAM** Cameroon • 36-3-0 (21 KOs)
- **10 MACIEJ SULECKI** Poland • 26-1-0 (10 KOs)

JR. MIDDLEWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 154 LBS

- **C (VACANT)**
- **1 JARRETT HURD** U.S. • 22-0-0 (15 KOs)
- **2 JERMELL CHARLO** U.S. • 31-0-0 (15 KOs)
- **3 ERISLANDY LARA** Cuba • 25-3-2 (14 KOs)
- **4 JAIME MUNGUIA** Mexico • 31-0-0 (26 KOs)
- **5 BRIAN CASTANO** Argentina • 15-0-0 (11 KOs)
- **6 MICHEL SORO** France • 32-2-1 (21 KOs)
- **7 JULIAN WILLIAMS** U.S. • 25-1-1 (15 KOs)
- **8 KELL BROOK** U.K. • 37-2-0 (26 KOs)
- **9 AUSTIN TROUT** U.S. • 31-5-0 (17 KOs)
- **10 LIAM SMITH** U.K. • 26-2-1 (14 KOs)

WELTERWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 147 LBS

- **C (VACANT)**
- **1 KEITH THURMAN** U.S. • 28-0-0 (22 KOs)
- **2 ERROL SPENCE** U.S. • 24-0-0 (21 KOs)
- **3 TERENCE CRAWFORD** U.S. • 33-0-0 (24 KOs)
- **4 SHAWN PORTER** U.S. • 29-2-1 (17 KOs)
- **5 MANNY PACQUIAO** Phil. • 60-7-2 (39 KOs)
- **6 DANNY GARCIA** U.S. • 34-2-0 (20 KOs)
- **7 JESSIE VARGAS** U.S. • 28-2-1 (10 KOs)
- **8 EGIDIJUS KAVALIAUSKAS** Lithuania • 20-0-0 (16 KOs)
- **9 JEFF HORN** Australia • 18-1-1 (12 KOs)
- **10 YORDENIS UGAS** Cuba • 23-3-0 (11 KOs)

JR. WELTERWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 140 LBS

- **C (VACANT)**
- **1 REGIS PROGRAIS** U.S. • 22-0-0 (19 KOs)
- **2 JOSH TAYLOR** U.K. • 13-0-0 (11 KOs)
- **3 JOSE RAMIREZ** U.S. • 23-0-0 (16 KOs)
- **4 KIRYL RELIKH** Belarus • 22-2-0 (19 KOs)
- **5 VIKTOR POSTOL** Ukraine • 29-2-0 (12 KOs)
- **6 EDUARD TROYANOVSKY** Russia • 27-1-0 (24 KOs)
- **7 MAURICE HOOKER** U.S. • 24-0-3 (16 KOs)
- **8 SERGEY LIPINETS** Russia • 14-1-0 (10 KOs)
- **9 IVAN BARANCHYK** Russia • 18-0-0 (11 KOs)
- **10 ANTONIO OROZCO** U.S. • 27-1-0 (17 KOs)

It didn't take long for David Lemieux (right) to "uncork" his power against Gary O'Sullivan, icing the Cork, Ireland, native in less than a round.

Jaime Munguia (left) made the second defense of his WBO 154-pound title by overwhelming Brandon Cook in three rounds.

LIGHTWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 135 LBS

- **C VASYL LOMACHENKO** Ukraine • 11-1-0 (9 KOs)
- **1 MIKEY GARCIA** U.S. • 39-0-0 (30 KOs)
- **2 JORGE LINARES** Venezuela • 44-4-0 (27 KOs)
- **3 ROBERT EASTER** U.S. • 21-1-0 (14 KOs)
- **4 JOSE PEDRAZA** Puerto Rico • 25-1-0 (12 KOs)
- **5 RICHARD COMMEY** Ghana • 27-2-0 (24 KOs)
- **6 ANTHONY CROLLA** U.K. • 33-6-3 (13 KOs)
- **7 RAYMUNDO BELTRAN** Mexico • 35-8-1 (21 KOs)
- **8 LUKE CAMPBELL** U.K. • 18-2-0 (15 KOs)
- **9 YVAN MENDY** France • 40-4-1 (19 KOs)
- **10 LEWIS RITSON** U.K. • 17-0-0 (11 KOs)

JR. LIGHTWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 130 LBS

- **C (VACANT)**
- **1 MIGUEL BERCHELT** Mexico • 34-1-0 (30 KOs)
- **2 GERVONTA DAVIS** U.S. • 20-0-0 (19 KOs)
- **3 ALBERTO MACHADO** P.R. • 20-0-0 (16 KOs)
- **4 TEVIN FARMER** U.S. • 26-4-1 (5 KOs)
- **5 FRANCISCO VARGAS** Mexico • 25-1-2 (18 KOs)
- **6 MIGUEL ROMAN** Mexico • 60-12-0 (47 KOs)
- **7 MASAYUKI ITO** Japan • 24-1-1 (12 KOs)
- **8 JEZREEL CORRALES** Panama • 22-2-0 (8 KOs)
- **9 JHONNY GONZALEZ** Mexico • 66-10-0 (54 KOs)
- **10 EDUARDO HERNANDEZ** Mexico • 26-0-0 (23 KOs)

FEATHERWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 126 LBS

- **C (VACANT)**
- **1 LEO SANTA CRUZ** U.S. • 35-1-1 (19 KOs)
- **2 GARY RUSSELL JR.** U.S. • 29-1-0 (17 KOs)
- **3 CARL FRAMPTON** U.K. • 26-1-0 (15 KOs)
- **4 OSCAR VALDEZ** Mexico • 24-0-0 (19 KOs)
- **5 ABNER MARES** Mexico • 31-3-1 (15 KOs)
- **6 JOSH WARRINGTON** U.K. • 27-0-0 (6 KOs)
- **7 JOSEPH DIAZ JR.** U.S. • 27-1-0 (14 KOs)
- **8 LEE SELBY** U.K. • 26-2-0 (9 KOs)
- **9 SCOTT QUIGG** U.K. • 34-2-2 (25 KOs)
- **10 JESUS ROJAS** P.R. • 26-2-2 (19 KOs)

JR. FEATHERWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 122 LBS

- **C (VACANT)**
- **1 ISAAC DOGBOE** Ghana • 20-0-0 (14 KOs)
- **2 GUILLERMO RIGONDEAUX** Cuba • 17-1-0 (11 KOs)
- **3 REY VARGAS** Mexico • 32-0-0 (22 KOs)
- **4 DANIEL ROMAN** U.S. • 25-2-1 (9 KOs)
- **5 JESSIE MAGDALENO** U.S. • 25-1-0 (18 KOs)
- **6 DIEGO DE LA HOYA** Mexico • 21-0-0 (10 KOs)
- **7 TJ DOHENY** Australia • 20-0-0 (14 KOs)
- **8 TOMOKI KAMEDA** Japan • 35-2-0 (20 KOs)
- **9 EMANUEL NAVARRETE** Mexico • 25-1-0 (22 KOs)
- **10 RYOSUKE IWASA** Japan • 25-3-0 (16 KOs)

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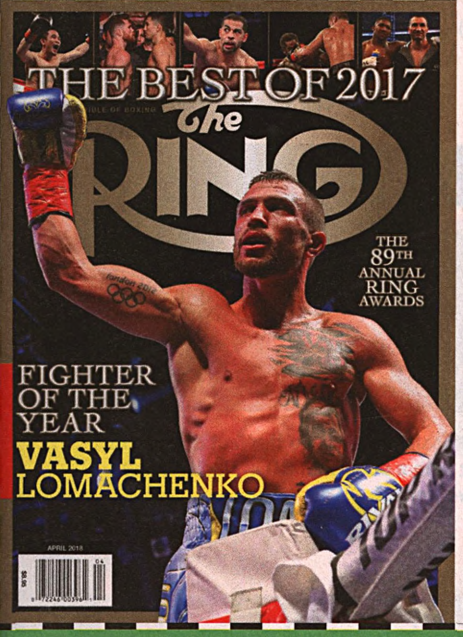

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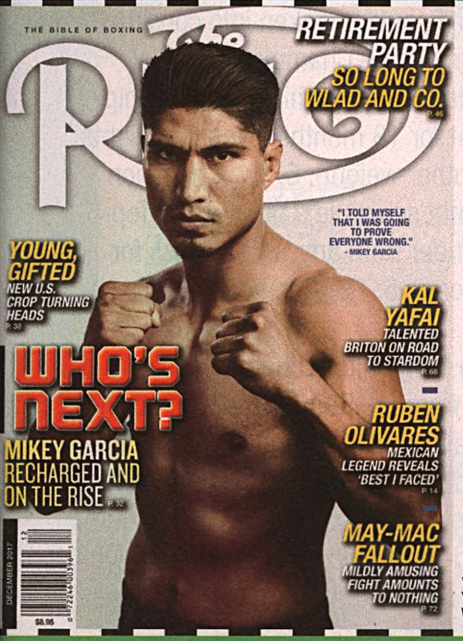

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RATINGS

Through fights of September 16, 2018

BANTAMWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 118 LBS

- **C (VACANT)**
- **1 ZOLANI TETE**
  S. Africa • 27-3-0 (21 KOs)
- **2 NAOYA INOUE**
  Japan • 16-0-0 (14 KOs)
- **3 RYAN BURNETT**
  U.K. • 19-0-0 (9 KOs)
- **4 EMMANUEL RODRIGUEZ**
  P.R. • 18-0-0 (12 KOs)
- **5 JUAN CARLOS PAYANO**
  Dom. Rep. • 20-1-0 (9 KOs)
- **6 ZHANAT ZHAKIYANOV**
  Kaz. • 27-2-0 (18 KOs)
- **7 LIBORIO SOLIS**
  Venezuela • 27-5-1 (12 KOs)
- **8 LEE HASKINS**
  U.K. • 35-4-0 (14 KOs)
- **9 JASON MOLONEY**
  Australia • 17-0-0 (14 KOs)
- **10 NORDINE OUBAALI**
  France • 14-0-0 (11 KOs)

JR. BANTAMWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 115 LBS

- **C SRISASKET SOR RUNGVISAI**
  Thailand • 46-4-1 (41 KOs)
- **1 JUAN FRANCISCO ESTRADA**
  Mexico • 37-3-0 (25 KOs)
- **2 KHALID YAFAI**
  U.K. • 24-0-0 (15 KOs)
- **3 JERWIN ANCAJAS**
  Phil. • 30-1-1 (20 KOs)
- **4 KAZUTO IOKA**
  Japan • 23-1-0 (13 KOs)
- **5 ROMAN GONZALEZ**
  Nicaragua • 47-2-0 (39 KOs)
- **6 ANDREW MOLONEY**
  Australia • 18-0-0 (11 KOs)
- **7 DONNIE NIETES**
  Philippines • 41-1-5 (23 KOs)
- **8 RAU'SHEE WARREN**
  U.S. • 16-2-0 (4 KOs)
- **9 ASTON PALICTE**
  Philippines • 24-2-1 (20 KOs)
- **10 MCWILLIAMS ARROYO**
  Puerto Rico • 17-4-0 (14 KOs)

FLYWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 112 LBS

- **C (VACANT)**
- **1 MORUTI MTHALANE**
  S. Africa • 36-2-0 (24 KOs)
- **2 ARTEM DALAKIAN**
  Ukraine • 17-0-0 (12 KOs)
- **3 ANDREW SELBY**
  U.K. • 10-0-0 (5 KOs)
- **4 CRISTOFER ROSALES**
  Nicaragua • 28-3-0 (19 KOs)
- **5 SHO KIMURA**
  Japan • 17-1-2 (10 KOs)
- **6 KOSEI TANAKA**
  Japan • 11-0-0 (7 KOs)
- **7 MASAYUKI KURODA**
  Japan • 30-7-3 (16 KOs)
- **8 FRANCISCO RODRIGUEZ JR.**
  Mexico • 28-4-1 (20 KOs)
- **9 VINCENT LEGRAND**
  France • 27-0-0 (16 KOs)
- **10 WENFENG GE**
  China • 11-0-0 (6 KOs)

JR. FLYWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 108 LBS

- **C HEKKIE BUDLER**
  S. Africa • 32-3-0 (10 KOs)
- **1 RYOICHI TAGUCHI**
  Japan • 27-3-2 (12 KOs)
- **2 KEN SHIRO**
  Japan • 13-0-0 (7 KOs)
- **3 CARLOS CANIZALES**
  Venezuela • 21-0-1 (17 KOs)
- **4 MILAN MELINDO**
  Phil. • 37-3-0 (13 KOs)
- **5 FELIX ALVARADO**
  Nicaragua • 33-2-0 (29 KOs)
- **6 ANGEL ACOSTA**
  P.R. • 18-1-0 (18 KOs)
- **7 GANIGAN LOPEZ**
  Mexico • 34-8-0 (19 KOs)
- **8 REY LORETO**
  Phil. • 24-14-0 (16 KOs)
- **9 EDWARD HENO**
  Phil. • 13-0-5 (5 KOs)
- **10 RANDY PETALCORIN**
  Phil. • 29-2-1 (22 KOs)

It took Roman Gonzalez (left) a few rounds to shake a year's worth of ring rust against Moises Fuentes, but "Chocolatito" found his form.

Nicaragua's Cristofer Rosales (left) made the first defense of his WBC flyweight belt with a body shot KO of Paddy Barnes in the Olympian's native Belfast.

STRAWWEIGHTS
WEIGHT LIMIT: 105 LBS

- **C (VACANT)**
- **1 WANHENG MENAYOTHIN**
  Thailand • 51-0-0 (18 KOs)
- **2 KNOCKOUT CP FRESHMART**
  Thailand • 18-0-0 (7 KOs)
- **3 HIROTO KYOGUCHI**
  Japan • 10-0-0 (7 KOs)
- **4 BYRON ROJAS**
  Nicaragua • 25-3-3 (11 KOs)
- **5 VIC SALUDAR**
  Philippines • 18-3-0 (10 KOs)
- **6 SIMPHIWE KHONCO**
  S. Africa • 19-5-0 (7 KOs)
- **7 JOSE ARGUMEDO**
  Mexico • 22-4-1 (13 KOs)
- **8 TATSUYA FUKUHARA**
  Japan • 21-6-6 (7 KOs)
- **9 TSUBASA KOURA**
  Japan • 13-0-0 (9 KOs)
- **10 DEEJAY KRIEL**
  S. Africa • 14-1-1 (6 KOs)

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RECORDS PROVIDED BY BOXREC.COM

Championship vacancies can be filled in the following two ways: 1. The Ring's Nos. 1 and 2 contenders fight one another. 2. If the Nos. 1 and 2 contenders choose not to fight one another and No. 1 fights No. 3, that matchup could be for the Ring title if the Editorial Board deems No. 3 worthy.

A champion can lose his belt in six situations: 1. The Champion loses a fight in the weight class in which he is champion; 2. The Champion moves to another weight class; 3. The Champion does not schedule a fight in any weight class for 18 months, although injuries and certain other unforeseen circumstances could be taken into consideration; 4. The Champion does not schedule a fight at his championship weight for 18 months (even if he fights at another weight); 5. The Champion does not schedule a fight with a Top-5 contender from any weight class for two years; 6. The Champion retires.

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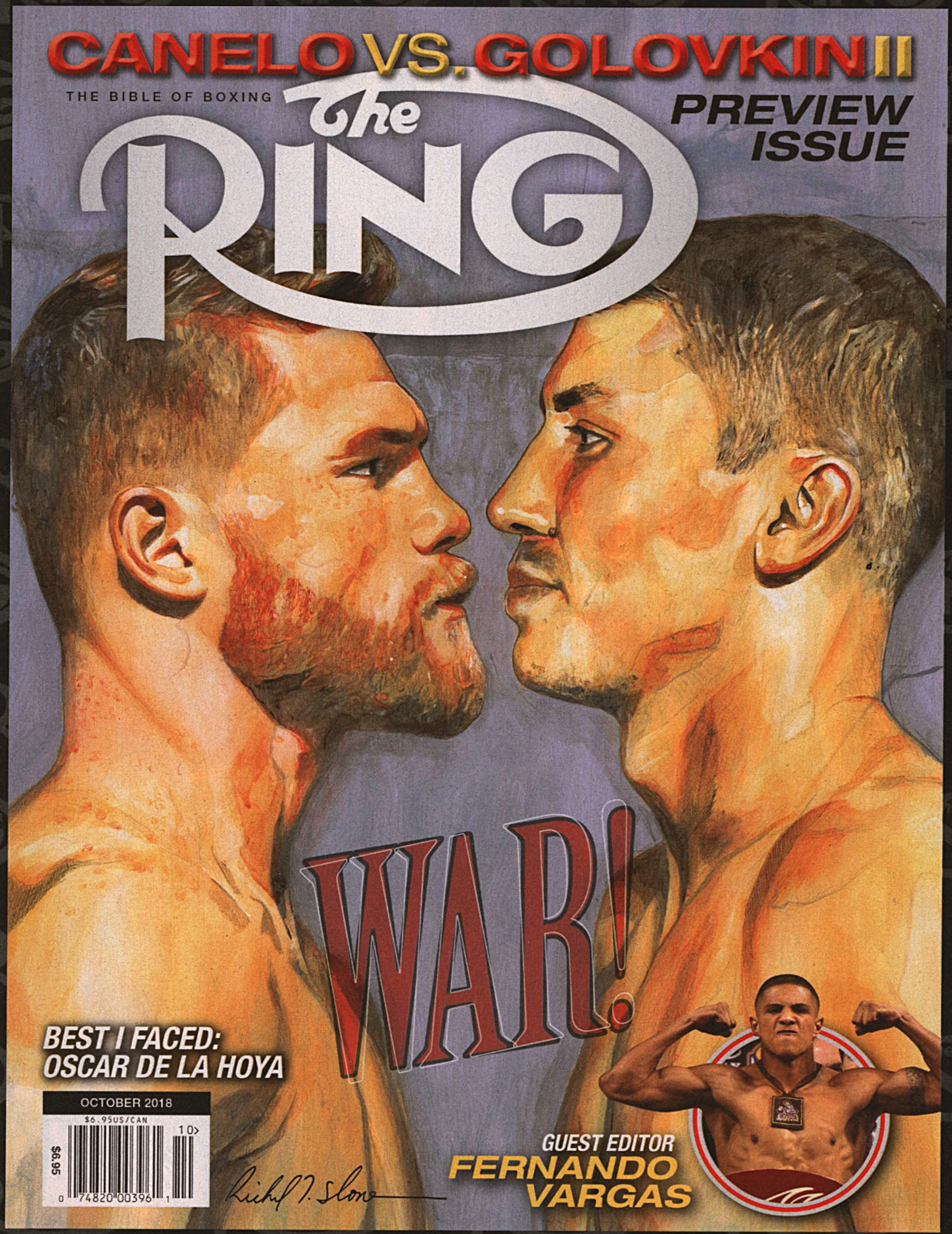

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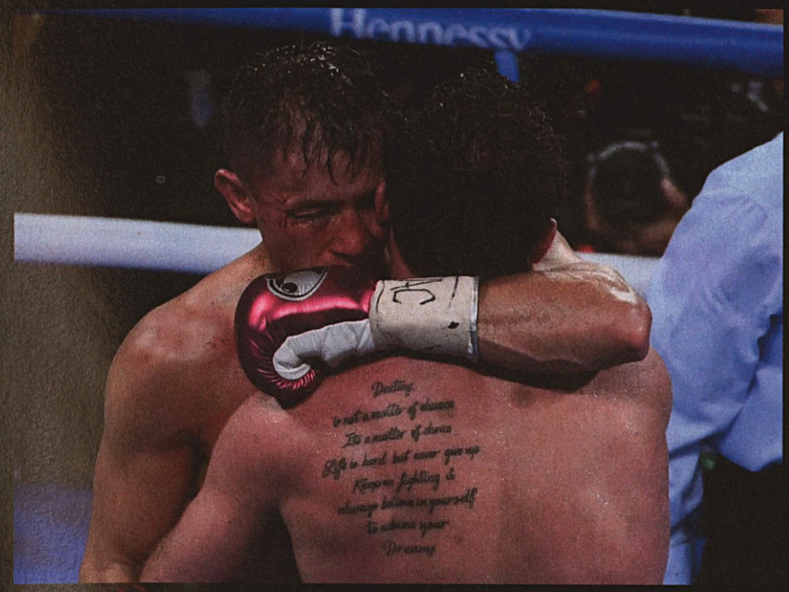


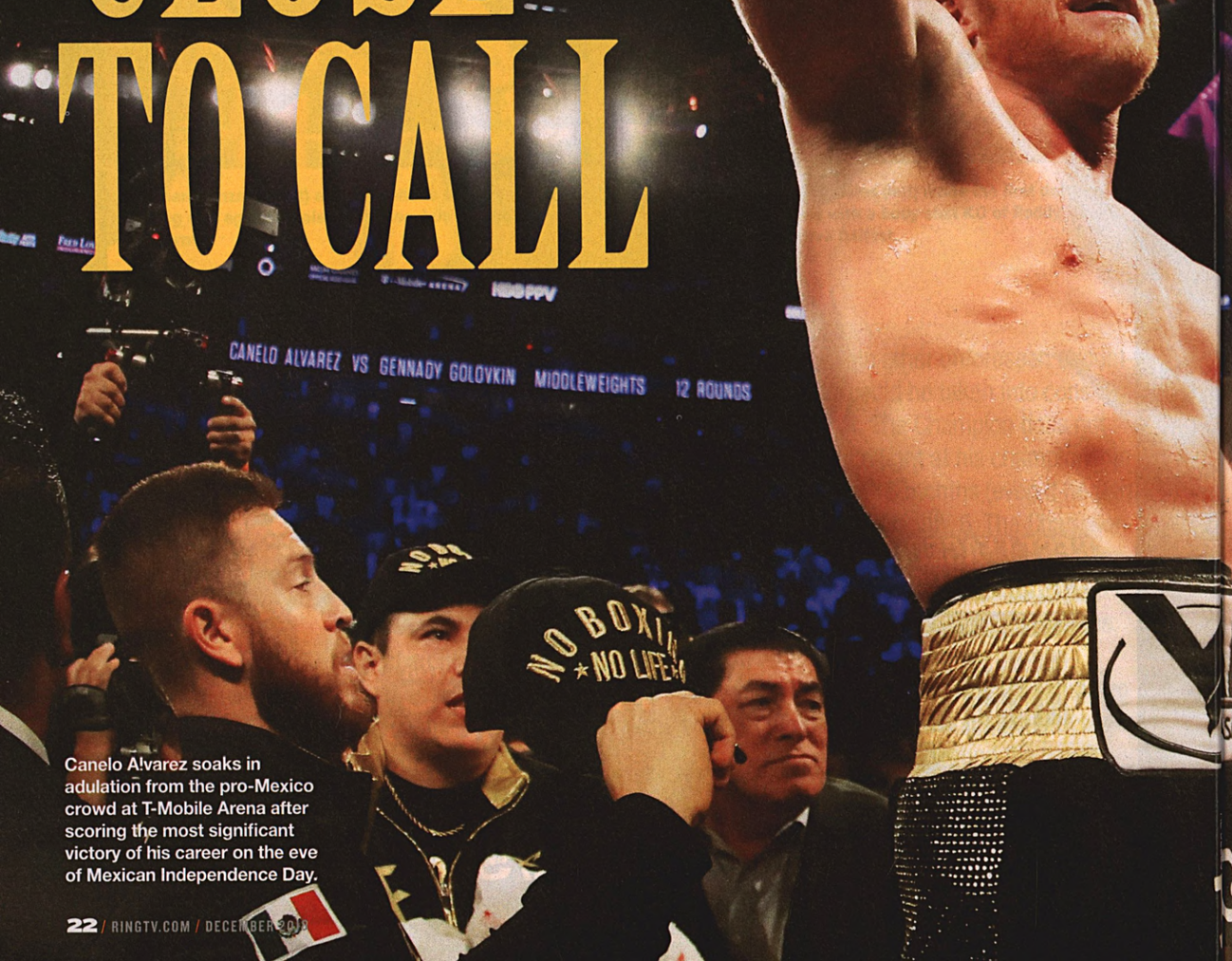
A HEATED RIVALRY LED TO A HOTLY CONTESTED – AND DISPUTED – MIDDLEWEIGHT CHAMPIONSHIP REMATCH BETWEEN **CANELO ALVAREZ** AND **GENNADY GOLOVKIN**, AND THIS TIME IT WAS THE MEXICAN STAR WHO WENT HOME WITH THE BELTS.

By **Doug Fischer**

The rematch between Canelo Alvarez and Gennady Golovkin was arguably the most anticipated and storyline-loaded middleweight championship since Marvin Hagler faced Sugar Ray Leonard. And like that classic 1987 confrontation of all-time greats, the styles and wills of Alvarez and Golovkin meshed to create 12 close and entertaining rounds that produced an official verdict that will likely be disputed and debated among hardcore fans for years, if not decades.

If Canelo-GGG 2 didn't quite live up to the high standard of Leonard-Hagler, it at least approached the skill and intensity of the first encounter between Mike McCallum and James Toney, another 12-round middleweight championship pitting an old master vs. a young master, resulting in an outcome that was too close to call. That 1991 classic ended in a controversial split draw, as did Alvarez-Golovkin I.

Alvarez-Golovkin II was not as controversial as the first bout, which most observers felt GGG should have won. The September 15 Fight of the Year candidate, which Alvarez won by close majority decision, was a legitimate coin flip, but the final tally seems just as disputed among the public and media as the first decision. However, Alvarez, who won by two



Canelo Alvarez soaks in adulation from the pro-Mexico crowd at T-Mobile Arena after scoring the most significant victory of his career on the eve of Mexican Independence Day.

Alvarez's bold tactic of staking out the center of the ring forced Gennady Golovkin to uncharacteristically box off his back foot, but the 36-year-old veteran's jab remained a formidable weapon.

scores of 115-113, fought hard and boldly enough to earn the grudging respect of Team GGG and even some of his most ardent haters among hardcore fandom.

"Naturally, everyone on the GGG side thought we won," Golovkin's promoter, Tom Loeffler, said during the post-fight press conference, "but we're not going to criticize the decision. Canelo fought a tremendous fight. We gotta give him a lot of credit. Canelo did what he said he was going to do – he came forward, he brought the fight.

"We think he made it a more exciting fight this time, and you gotta give both guys credit."

Golovkin, who refused to give a post-fight interview in the ring for the HBO pay-per-view broadcast, attended the post-fight presser with large sunglasses covering the bruises and swelling around his eyes. He was clearly disappointed about losing his first professional bout, but he spoke respectfully of Alvarez for the first time in several months.

"He left this building as a champion," Golovkin said in Russian that was translated for the English-speaking media. "I feel like I'm a champion, but he is also a champion. It was a fight of two champions tonight."

The result of their first bout, which also took place at T-Mobile Arena one year prior to the rematch, ended the once-amicable relationship between Golovkin and Alvarez. Golovkin, outraged by Adalaide Byrd's egregious 118-110 score for Alvarez, began speaking publicly (often translated from Russian to ensure that his message was clear) about what he viewed as industry corruption that favored the Mexican star and his promotional company, Golden Boy Promotions. Golovkin's trainer, Abel Sanchez, and Loeffler relentlessly chided Alvarez for not fighting the traditional come-forward "Mexican style" that their fighter had adopted years ago. Team Canelo dismissed the ridicule as sour grapes and ignorance of true boxing skill.

But the bad blood between camps

'I FEEL LIKE I'M A CHAMPION, BUT HE IS ALSO A CHAMPION. IT WAS A FIGHT OF TWO CHAMPIONS TONIGHT.'

boiled over when Alvarez tested positive for the banned substance clenbuterol in February and was subsequently suspended by the Nevada Athletic Commission, canceling the rematch originally scheduled for May 5. From that point on, Golovkin alleged that Alvarez was probably "juiced" for their first bout, and much of the boxing world agreed with the long-reigning unified champ. Canelo was hounded by Sanchez (who questioned Team Alvarez's hand-wrapping technique, among other practices), criticized by media, derided by fans and forced to renegotiate a higher purse percentage for Golovkin in their rescheduled rematch.

All of the animosity, controversy and scrutiny appeared to get to Alvarez when he charged Golovkin on the stage of their high-profile weigh-in the day before the fight. It was uncharacteristic, almost reminiscent of the way the young, hot-headed Toney had to be held back from attacking McCallum at the press conferences for their first bout.

Was Team GGG in his head? Was he just showing off for his loyal fans among the thousands that packed T-Mobile to witness the weigh-in? No. He was just as pissed off as Golovkin and dead serious about his vow to knock the slight odds favorite out.

As expected, the rancor between the two middleweights made for a more heated contest. It may have exceeded its lofty expectations.

Alvarez (50-1-2, 34 knockouts), whose upper body was noticeably slimmed down from the bulky appearance of the first bout, took firm command of the center of the ring from the opening bell. Unlike the first fight, the 28-year-old Mexican refused to give up ground to the celebrated pressure fighter.

In the early rounds of the bout, Alvarez served notice to fans, media and, most importantly, to Golovkin: "This fight," he said with sweeping left hooks to Golovkin's head and accurate body punches to the champion's midsection, "will be different. This fight will be better. This is MY fight."

Golovkin (38-1-1, 34 KOs), to his credit, answered the younger man's challenge, setting a torrid pace with a workrate that belied his 36 years. However, in a surprise twist that may have cost the Kazakhstan native the fight, he did so with ring smarts, not brute force or forward-marching aggression. Drawing upon his vast amateur experience of more than 350 bouts, Golovkin reverted to the form that earned him a world amateur championship and a 2004 Olympic silver medal. He boxed Canelo from the perimeter of the ring center that Canelo had staked out, firing an accurate jab, moving in close to land right crosses and compact uppercuts before backing out of range and then stepping around the confident young challenger.

"I felt comfortable," Golovkin said. "I felt I controlled the fight. Even though he wasn't running, he wasn't controlling the fight. I was."

As champions age and leave their physical primes, the special ones are able to modify their ring styles to accommodate for their decline in athleticism. When they can no longer beat their opponents into submission, their objective changes from dishing out beatdowns to "controlling" the fight, as Golovkin noted, through ring generalship.

We've seen this transformation

from middleweight kings of previous eras. By the time he faced Leonard, Hagler was no longer able to switch into high gear as he had during his famous shootout with Thomas Hearns two years earlier, but the southpaw technician was still able to outwork his fast and flashy rival over three minutes of each round, as Golovkin did in many rounds against Alvarez. McCallum, who was 35 when he faced Toney, was no longer "The Bodysnatcher," but he was still a jab-master, as Golovkin remains. And Bernard Hopkins, the great former middleweight champ whose title-defense record was in Golovkin's crosshairs going into the Alvarez rematch, was no longer "The Executioner" when he unified titles against Felix Trinidad at 36 and future Golden Boy partner Oscar De La Hoya at 39. However, he proved to be a complete boxer in finding ways to neutralize the younger stars.

Golovkin wasn't able to dissect Alvarez in the manner that Hopkins gradually took apart Trinidad and De La Hoya, but he came on strong during the second half of the fight – heeding Sanchez, who told him "Hey, we're losing" and implored him to "stay in the pocket" between Rounds 6 and 7 – to close the gap on the official scorecards.

Golovkin remained closer to his adversary and stepped up his power-punch output, landing more hooks and right hands – one of which appeared to rock Alvarez in Round 10 – but instead of overwhelming the Guadalajara native, it forced them both to dig deeper and create more drama. Alvarez thwarted Golovkin's follow-up attack in Round 10 with deft head and upper body movement, then came back with big shots of his own.

Alvarez stalked through Golovkin's best one-two combinations and didn't relinquish the center of the ring until a momentary retreat to the ropes in Round 11. Both fighters were exhausted going into the final round, but it was Golovkin who landed more punches. However, judges Dave Moretti and Steve Weisfeld seemed to reward Alvarez's defiance by scoring the round for him. Glenn Feldman scored Round 12 for Golovkin, as did most observers, and the fight a 114-114 draw.

The narrow points verdict earned Alvarez the WBC and WBA middleweight belts and allowed him to regain the Ring championship that was stripped from him following his suspension. Winning the biggest fight of his career on Mexican Independence Day, fighting in the manner he did, also earned a measure of redemption among Mexican fans who may have turned away from him in the aftermath of the first bout's controversy and the clenbuterol scandal.

Alvarez said in the buildup to the rematch that he would go for the knockout, and he stayed true to his word once the bell rang.

"I'm satisfied with how I won tonight," Alvarez said during the post-fight press conference. "This was a very important victory to me, my career and my country.

"Unfortunately, I didn't get the knockout that I was looking for, but thank God we walked away with a victory."

Before Alvarez took questions from the media, he gave special recognition to his camp members, especially the father-and-son team of Chepo and Eddy Reynoso, who have guided his entire career.

"They took me from nothing, since age 13, to the highest levels of boxing," he said. "They are more than trainers; they are my family."

Eddy Reynoso was pleased with his prize pupil's performance.

"When you have a versatile fighter, you can change game plans," he said. "We saw in the first fight that the best way to beat Golovkin was to move him back. So, we didn't work on lateral movement for this fight; we worked on everything else."

Daring to be the aggressor against a feared puncher worked out for Team Canelo. However, fans and media will remain divided on who they believe won. Like Hagler-Leonard and Toney-McCallum I, the Alvarez-Golovkin rematch is one of those fights that boxing aficionados may never come to a consensus on.

Canelo supporters will always maintain that he called Team GGG's bluff, fought "Mexican Style" and out-slugged the puncher. CompuBox statistics support their claim, crediting Alvarez with a 143-116 edge in power connects. Golovkin's backers will always believe that their man out-jabbed, outworked and outboxed Alvarez. CompuBox stats, which credit GGG with a 234-202 edge in total punch-connects and a 118-59 edge in jabs landed, also support their side of the argument.

The truth probably resides somewhere between both schools of thought, and much of press row – including The Ring – scored the fight a draw.

What's next for the evenly matched rivals is anybody's guess.

Alvarez has a tentative HBO date on December 15 that could land in New York City or Las Vegas, according to Golden Boy president Eric Gomez. The leading candidate for an opponent is former beltholder David Lemieux, who salvaged his top-10 contender status with a one-punch, first-round KO of Gary O'Sullivan on the September 15 undercard. However, the nasty cut Alvarez sustained above his left eye could scuttle those plans.

Loeffler has mentioned Japanese star Ryota Murata as a potential late-December foe for Golovkin since the start of the year, but the grueling nature of the Alvarez rematch (and the cut suffered near the veteran's right eye) has Team GGG considering sitting out the remainder of 2018.

More than likely, fans won't see Alvarez or Golovkin back in the ring until the first quarter of 2019 (or Cinco De Mayo weekend for Canelo). There are viable options for both, as the 160-pound division is as fertile as ever (see Tom Gray's feature story on Page 34), but while hardcore fans salivate at the thought of either middleweight star facing Jermall Charlo, Billy Joe Saunders or Daniel Jacobs, the fight the general public wants to see is Canelo-GGG 3.

It probably won't take place as soon as next May, it might not be distributed by HBO in the U.S. (a story for another time) and the buildup won't be as contentious as it was for the rematch, but a third fight between the future Hall of Famers will happen.

Count on it.

DOUBLE TIME

NOW IN POSITION TO FACE THE TOP DOGS AT 160 AND 154, 2019 COULD BE THE YEAR **THE CHARLO TWINS** TAKE OVER

By **Mike Coppinger**

Now Jermell Charlo was animated.

He'd recently watched a Netflix documentary and learned that olive oil typically isn't imported from Italy, despite it often being advertised as such. He made sure the server at Eataly in Los Angeles knew exactly how prevalent olive oil fraud is.

Jermell passionately explained how the documentary opened his eyes, and all Jermall could do was smirk.

Sure, they're identical twins, and even share the same hairstyle, down to the dyed blonde hair laid upon brown locks. But if you know the Charlo brothers, it's easy to tell them apart.

Jermall can be bombastic, too, but he's more mild-mannered than his brother, and insists he's the better dresser as well (they were headed to a GQ shoot for the magazine's Fall 2018 catalog after lunch; the twins are currently showcased in a 28-page segment featuring them in various designer clothes.). Jermall is also the larger of the twins; he is now competing at middleweight after he and Jermell spent time as dual titleholders at 154 pounds.

With an abundance of charisma, good looks, crushing power – and yes, the unique hook of being boxing twins – the Charlos seem destined for the limelight. However, their star turns haven't materialized yet. Could 2019 be the year they break through?

Jermall doesn't currently have a fight scheduled, but as they're always quick to point out, when one brother fights, they're both under the spotlight. "If I fight, he fights, and if he fights, I fight," Jermall says, "so we trade off each other no matter what."

Jermell is being lined up for a Ring junior middleweight championship fight with Jarrett Hurd, easily the most high-profile fight of his career. The victor figures to be catapulted onto the ever-elusive pound-for-pound list.

And the door could be opening for Jermall, too. Now that Canelo Alvarez has scored a victory over Gennady Golovkin, the rivals could head in different directions in the first part of 2019 before a possible third matchup in September. Jermall knows his time will come against either Canelo or GGG; it's just a matter of when.

"All I can do is wait," says Jermall, who's 27-0 with 21 knockouts during his 10-year pro career. "All I can do is just take my time and I'll get there sooner or later. I want the main belt; I'm already halfway there." He's the mandatory challenger to the WBC title Canelo wrested from GGG via majority decision in the year's biggest event. The 28-year-old from Houston sat ringside in Las Vegas alongside Jermell and Errol Spence Jr. to take in the rematch and grab an up-close look at his potential future foes.

He's had just two fights at 160 pounds – vicious knockouts of Jorge Heiland and Hugo Centeno – but if he's matched with Canelo or GGG, there's a segment of writers and fans

The Charlos have a brash and theatrical manner of hyping each other up that attracts attention but also polarizes hardcore boxing fans.

who will tilt the matchup in his favor. The Ring's No. 5-ranked middleweight possesses a blend of speed, power and athleticism that figures to present a difficult puzzle for anyone who steps in the ring with him.

"I like Canelo's style, but Golovkin works harder and he's a harder fight because his style is different," Jermall analyzed prior to the second meeting between Canelo and GGG. "To keep Golovkin off ... it would be a harder fight. Canelo is a lot more flashy, but he tends to box and wants to move, and when he does that he gets into loopholes. So I can do some things.

"There's a way to fight them, and I feel like I know how to fight them. My game plan is to use my youth, my athleticism, my size, my natural ability, and put it with my physical ability and get the win. Golovkin is going to bring out more supernatural talent (in me) than you've seen in the past. ... Once the jitters are gone, I'm good. Once my brother is like, 'You good? You ready, Mall?' I'm ready to fight.

"If I fight Golovkin ... the moment I find my relaxation, it could be a second-round knockout type of fight."

Despite the bold prediction, Jermall didn't hide his affinity for the 36-year-old Kazakh. "He's like the new Mike Tyson, and he's not avoiding anybody. He's knocking everybody out. We love Golovkin. If they made a new EA Sports game *Knockout Kings*, we would play with him in the video game. I would use him. He's good. GGG has great balance. He uses a lot of angles."

The Charlos have their own talents that are obvious in the ring. Even so, their outsized personalities have rubbed many fans the wrong way. After Jermell scored a blistering first-round knockout of former top prospect Erickson Lubin in October 2017, he continued to denigrate his opponent in the post-fight interview.

To some fans and media, it was proof of Jermell's authenticity – the twins aren't simply hyping their fights. When they engage in a war of words, they mean it. To others, it was more disrespectful behavior.

Richard Schaefer, who promoted a slew of their fights when the duo was on the way up, is confident they'll cross over into the consciousness of the casual sports fan. "These are going to be pay-per-view stars," the former Swiss banker says. "You see the charisma and the personalities. They've got it."

Floyd Mayweather, who was the A-side in the two highest-grossing fights of all time, wore the black hat to perfection. Fans paid in hopes the opponent would finally tack that elusive "1" to the end of his ledger. Of course, it never happened.

The Charlos, too, play the heel. Their aggressive nature in public has caught the ire of boxing fans; there's already a large contingent on Twitter praying for their downfall. "The people that do know us, they love us," Jermell says.

Perhaps the reason the Charlos haven't broken through yet is lack of promotion. Sure, the twins provide great soundbites and are among the best fighters in the sport. But their success in the marketing sector has largely fallen on them alone, much like many of manager Al Haymon's other fighters. After all, they aren't aligned to a specific promoter. Instead, it's a different person each time out handling their event, depending on location.

When Jermell outpointed Austin Trout in June (Jermall had already beaten Trout two years earlier), Schaefer took the lead, since the bout was in Los Angeles. For Jermall's second-round KO of Centeno a few weeks earlier in New York, it was Lou DiBella who had the reins. And each time, the Charlos were relegated to the undercard.

Neither Jermall nor Jermell has headlined a high-profile show yet. That could change now that Haymon has linked up with Fox for 10 annual shows, beginning in December, in addition to a new deal with Showtime that calls for an expansion of boxing programming.

Inactivity, too, has plagued the Charlos, even if they aren't bothered by it – "We build off each other, so it is what it is," said Jermall. He has competed only once in both 2017 and '18; no fights were scheduled as this went to publication. Jermell fought twice last year and once in 2018. He, too, had no fights scheduled and is facing a domestic violence charge.

They're among the most sought-after promotional free agents in the sport. Bob Arum approached the Charlos with hopes of placing their fights on ESPN. Eddie Hearn, who has a deal with DAZN, made the same pursuit.

"The numbers look decent, but it's not a career move right now," Jermall says. "It's not something that's going to significantly make our career like 10 times better. So we gotta wait.

"I want something to blow me away. Something that makes it worth going over there. If they halfway want us over there, then (they're not going to do what they really, really have) to do to make us superstars.

"They gotta bring it, just like we bringing it. We gotta show the boxing world that we're serious about being champions.

"We'll make adjustments as my career goes. I might not need a promoter now, but boxing might change in five years where you need a promoter."

Every fighter needs a proper foil to push him to the next level. For Mayweather, it was Oscar De La Hoya. For Jermall Charlo, it just might be Canelo.

Alvarez has drawn sizable crowds in Texas for bouts with Austin Trout and Erislandy Lara, two dangerous foes that top boxers were mostly avoiding. Jermall, a lifelong Texan, fits the same bill.

"Canelo knows that we're both young, a lot more polished, a lot more issues," Jermall says. "I'm more high-risk for Canelo than GGG ... He might have power, but Charlo has power, too, so we're even. He might be fast, but everybody knows he's slower than me; I'm way faster than Canelo.

"Canelo has a lot of IQ because he's been in a lot of fights. I believe in Canelo's IQ. But I'm smart too.

"I'm just waiting on that moment, man. All I can do is just sit back and let it come." RING

BERNARD HOPKINS: THE EXECUTIONS

FORMER MIDDLEWEIGHT CHAMP **BERNARD HOPKINS** REVISITS SOME OF THE MANY FIGHTS THAT DEFINED HIS EXTRAORDINARY CAREER

By **Tom Gray** and **Bernard Hopkins**

At his very best, legendary two-weight world champion Bernard Hopkins wore opponents down like a virus, and on many occasions the symptoms continued long after the final bell.

More than any other fighter of his era, Hopkins became synonymous with destroying careers. In September 2001, Felix Trinidad entered Madison Square Garden as an "is" and left as a "was" after Hopkins thoroughly outclassed him with a punch-perfect display. The same fate befell Antonio Tarver, Kelly Pavlik and Jean Pascal. What's even more remarkable is that all of these fighters were favored by the oddsmakers coming in.

Hopkins' 28-year professional career is split into two Hall of Fame sections. There was the middleweight title run, which included wins over Glen Johnson, John David Jackson, Keith Holmes, Trinidad and Oscar De La Hoya. Then, following a pair of close decision defeats to Jermain Taylor, the ex-champion moved up two divisions to produce another slew of miracles at light heavyweight.

His ability to continually rise to the occasion in his 40s made Hopkins a veritable incarnation of former

Bernard Hopkins falls to the canvas in unbridled celebration after stopping Felix Trinidad, who was previously unbeaten and the odds-on favorite, in the 12th round of a boxing clinic for the ages.

champion Archie Moore. As well as the longevity, Hopkins also inherited the "old school" skills of such warriors and was a master of his craft. "The Executioner" didn't rescue victories from the jaws of defeat with a single shot like a 45-year-old George Foreman did against Michael Moorer in November 1994. In a young man's game, Hopkins dominated fighters who were young enough to be his offspring, and that made him unique.

Hopkins finally hung up his gloves at the age of 51 following an eighth-round defeat to Joe Smith Jr. It is the only time the great former champion was stopped, but while it wasn't the ending he or his fans deserved, there is no denying that Hopkins' overall career was a massive success story. The Philadelphia native will walk into the Hall of Fame as a first-ballot inductee and will be remembered as one of the greatest middleweight champions of all time.

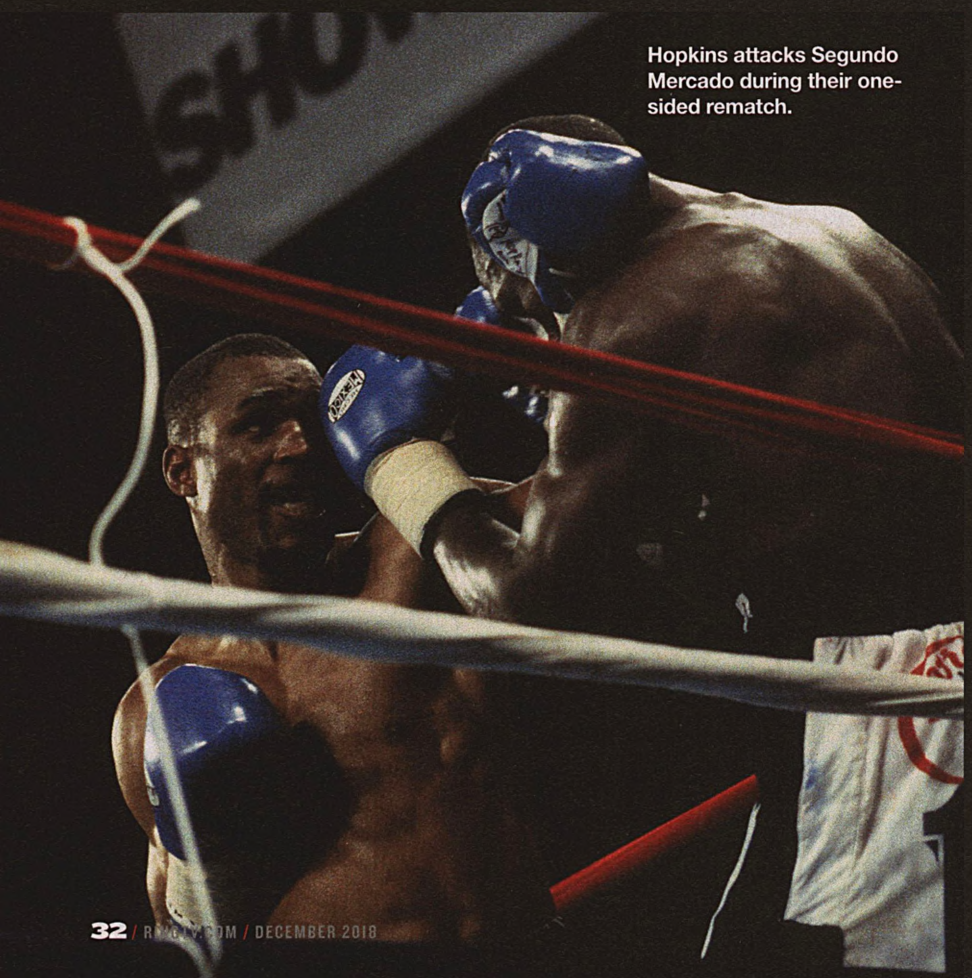
Here, Hopkins looks back on six career-defining victories.

SEGUNDO MERCADO

APRIL 29, 1995, U.S. AIR ARENA, LANDOVER, MARYLAND • TITLES: VACANT IBF MIDDLEWEIGHT

"My promoter at the time, Butch Lewis, and Don King, Mercado's promoter, took me to Ecuador three days before the first fight and we're 11,000 feet above sea level. Essentially I was being delivered to the farmer as a slave. We fought in Mercado's country and they called it a draw. In the second fight, we're in my country and my thoughts were, 'You are mine! I've got you this time. You're in my country, and what you didn't do in your country, that's on you. I'm not going to blow my chance in the United States.' And I knocked him out in seven rounds. He's not going to beat me in my house. We were only an hour away from Philadelphia. He couldn't get a win over me in Ecuador, of all places. How can he win when we're in America? The only way he could have won is if I didn't show up."

RESULT: HOPKINS TKO 7



Hopkins attacks Segundo Mercado during their one-sided rematch.

FELIX TRINIDAD

SEPT. 29, 2001, MADISON SQUARE GARDEN, NEW YORK • TITLES: THE RING (RETROACTIVELY), IBF, WBA AND WBC MIDDLEWEIGHT

"I won that fight when I managed to get out of Puerto Rico alive after throwing the flag down at the press conference. I had won the fight from a mental point of view. I had done something that was bold and disrespectful, but it told Trinidad, 'I'm not afraid of you!' After that, I had to back up my actions by putting hard work in. I regret doing that with the flag now because I love visiting Puerto Rico and I've been over there about 10 times since the fight. But I can't regret doing what I did at that particular time, because I had to be in that frame of mind. There were some people who stopped being fans of mine after that and figured I was racist, but that was not the case. That comes with maturity and I was 36 years old at that time. I knew what I was doing."

RESULT: HOPKINS TKO 12

OSCAR DE LA HOYA

SEPT. 18, 2004, MGM GRAND, LAS VEGAS • TITLES: THE RING, IBF, WBA, WBC AND WBO MIDDLEWEIGHT

"Oscar was 'The Golden Boy' and people were looking at me like I was silver. I had to be aggressive and make sure that the fight wasn't close in any way, shape or form. I went in there knowing that if I didn't knock him out, I couldn't win the fight. I gradually figured Oscar out as the rounds passed, and that's the calculating part of my style. I was also able to take more chances because, unlike Trinidad, Oscar didn't bring his power up to middleweight. I was able to put my offense in front of my defense. I didn't need to be as careful as I was against Trinidad. I'd tasted Oscar's power over the first three or four rounds, and I was able to get him in an offensive mode. I couldn't get him when he was in a defensive mode, but once I hit him between his

punches, we got a knockout reaction with the liver shot."

RESULT: HOPKINS KO 9

ANTONIO TARVER

JUNE 10, 2006, BOARDWALK HALL, ATLANTIC CITY • TITLES: THE RING

"I'd done everything there was to do in the middleweight division and I thought I definitely won the first fight with Jermain Taylor. There wouldn't have been a rematch had I got that decision. The Tarver fight was all about history, and I love history. Sugar Ray Robinson had tried to move up and win the light heavyweight title against Joey Maxim. The heat was so bad that Robinson couldn't answer the bell for the 14th round, and they also had to replace the referee because he was suffering from heat exhaustion. Robinson was winning that fight on all scorecards and the heat was the only thing that stopped him from being the first middleweight champion to win the light heavyweight title. Tarver had been shooting a Rocky movie and blew up to 200 pounds. I knew he had left it late [to get in shape], and that plus the movie was to my advantage. I hired my friend Mackie Shilstone (a highly regarded motivator/strength-and-conditioning coach) and went on a mission."

RESULT: HOPKINS UD 12

KELLY PAVLIK

OCT. 28, 2008, BOARDWALK HALL, ATLANTIC CITY • TITLES: NON-TITLE BOUT AT 170 POUNDS

"This fight was important because I overcame losses (the previous fight to Joe Calzaghe), at least one of which was a robbery (Jermain Taylor I). Pavlik had knocked out Jermain Taylor, who got two decisions over me. OK, but that was misleading. I don't believe that I ever lost to Jermain Taylor. Suddenly everyone starts saying that I'm looking for a paycheck against Pavlik. They never said that with Roy Jones in 1993. They never said that in all the other fights. Now, all of a sudden, I'm going to get hurt and I'm just looking for a paycheck before I retire. They were so adamant that this country boy from Youngstown, Ohio, was the only man who could knock out Bernard Hopkins. After the fight, I stared down at the media at ringside and I was very serious. I wanted to let them know that I could look at them, say nothing, but tell them everything."

RESULT: HOPKINS UD 12

Hopkins broke George Foreman's record of being the oldest man to win a major world boxing title by outpointing Jean Pascal in their rematch.

JEAN PASCAL II

MAY 21, 2011, BELL CENTRE, MONTREAL • TITLES: THE RING AND WBC LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHT

"Quebec wasn't too far away from the States, but I felt like I was fighting a lot further away from home. When we fought the first time, it was extremely cold over there. Pascal had a really good reputation, but I wanted to let everyone know that I wasn't finished. Again, I thought I won the first fight and, just like with Mercado, I had to come back from two knockdowns. The standout thing in the Pascal rematch was the push-ups. That was bold. When I did the push-ups between rounds, Pascal actually stopped listening to his trainer. He heard the home crowd hollering and wanted to see what was going on. He suddenly sees an old man doing five or six push-ups when he couldn't wait to get back to his stool at the end of the round. That was a classic, man. None of that was planned. You see, I'm an opportunist when it comes to executing mind games."

RESULT: HOPKINS UD 12

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THE MIDDLE MEN

WITH THE GOLOVKIN FEUD SETTLED (FOR THE TIME BEING), THE FUTURE OF THE COMPETITIVE 160-POUND DIVISION NOW REVOLVES AROUND **CANELO ALVAREZ**

By **Tom Gray**

Bernard Hopkins and Oscar De La Hoya believe the sky's the limit for Canelo Alvarez after the star of the Golden Boy stable defeated Gennady Golovkin, but the 28-year-old champ has stern challenges from other top middleweights ahead of him.

It was Sept. 16, 2018 – the morning after the superfight.

Mexican icon Canelo Alvarez had just avenged last September's controversial draw with Gennady Golovkin by scoring a 12-round majority decision over his archrival at the T-Mobile Arena in Las Vegas. With the victory, Alvarez laid claim to the Ring, WBA and WBC middleweight championships, as well as a No. 3 spot in this magazine's mythical pound-for-pound rankings.

Without waxing lyrical, Canelo-Golovkin II was a wonderful prizefight. The action was reminiscent of the middleweight glory days of the 1950s featuring Sugar Ray Robinson, Jake LaMotta, Randy Turpin, Gene Fullmer and Carmen Basilio; or the star-studded 1980s showdowns between The Fabulous Four: Roberto Duran, Marvelous Marvin Hagler, Thomas Hearns and Sugar Ray Leonard. And, as the majority decision indicated, the two fighters were so evenly matched that it was almost impossible to separate them.

The winner, however, was Alvarez. The 28-year-old boxer-puncher from Guadalajara came out to meet Golovkin in the center of the ring, and that's where he remained. In years gone by, that strategy would've been akin to pulling out a hungry crocodile's teeth with your bare hands, but Alvarez made it work. As well as a slew of world title belts, the new champion also seems to have regained a portion of the respect he lost following the revelation that he had tested positive for trace amounts of clenbuterol. Despite the tainted meat explanation, that will be a slow, if

not unending, process.

So what's next? A third Canelo-Golovkin fight is always plausible, but there are other top players at 160 pounds. Brooklyn's Daniel Jacobs already pushed Golovkin to the limit in their March 2017 clash, which ended in a close unanimous decision loss. And Billy Joe Saunders, the unbeaten WBO titleholder, is coming off a dazzling and comprehensive whitewash of former titleholder David Lemieux just before Christmas.

We'll look ahead to Jacobs' and Saunders' forthcoming middleweight title bouts, but what's clear for now is that all roads to division domination lead through Alvarez.

"The sky's the limit for Canelo," said Bernard Hopkins, the all-time great middleweight who co-promotes Alvarez through Golden Boy Promotions. "Now it's about how far Canelo wants to go. How much does he want to be spoken about in years to come? He's only a young champion. Does he want to be talked about in 15, 20, 30 years from now? If so, he must put the work in now.

"Canelo has all the ingredients. He's a nice-looking guy, he's a world champion and he can sell a fight. James Kirkland wasn't a star ... Liam Smith wasn't a star, but Canelo packed a stadium. And despite the numbers for those fights, Canelo has always been a risk-taker and he's always wanted to face the very best."

And that's definitely good news for fight fans.

Outside of Canelo and Golovkin, Jacobs is considered by many to be the finest 160-pound fighter on the planet. Next up for "The Miracle Man" will be a vacant IBF title bout against Sergiy Derevyanchenko on October 27 at The Theater at Madison Square Garden, and this is definitely no time for Jacobs to get complacent.

"Jacobs gave Golovkin all he could handle and, even though I thought he lost a close fight, it was a great performance," said three-time middleweight title challenger Matthew Macklin. "He'll be dying for another crack (at an elite-level fighter) and it could be him against Canelo, or it could be a rematch with Golovkin.

"However, when you're looking for big pay-per-view fights, someone like Derevyanchenko becomes a tough proposition. This is a huge opportunity for him, too. Jacobs is good technically, he's got quick hands, a great jab and he's a puncher, so there's not a lot to criticize. He did get knocked out years ago by Dmitry Pirog, but there'd been a death in his family and Pirog was a helluva fighter who was unknown in America."

Saunders, who is also relatively unknown in the United States, will debut there on October 20 against former junior middleweight titleholder Demetrius Andrade. The precocious British southpaw will make the fourth defense of his title at the TD Garden in Boston, and he'll be looking to bolster his case for a unification superfight with Alvarez in 2019.

The last time Saunders was overlooked, he turned Lemieux inside-out in front of the Canadian's hometown fans. At his best, the former amateur standout is a terrific counterpuncher with fast hands, quick feet, finely tuned reflexes and excellent ring craft. There is still no denying that Andrade is a significant threat to his reign, although, surprisingly, Saunders has real backing across the Atlantic.

"Billy Joe is the guy they all better look out for," said Buddy McGirt, Macklin's old trainer and a former two-weight world champion. "Saunders' style is unbelievable, and that kid can fight. I'd be happy to train him up for Canelo or Golovkin. He's a good southpaw with fast feet, and he'll be a problem for anybody in the middleweight division.

"I also think a lot of Danny Jacobs, and he's a helluva fighter too. He troubled Triple G quite a bit when they fought, but I think Triple G took him lightly that night. It's amazing what Danny came through (to overcome cancer and continue his career). I love the kid and I wish him

1

160-POUND POWER PLAY

Canelo Alvarez is at the top of the middleweight mountain, but some of his greatest challenges may still lie ahead. The Mexican superstar has yet to face four out of the five best 160-pound fighters in the world today.

1 GENNADY GOLOVKIN
Age: 36 • **Record:** 38-1-1 (34 KOs) • **Notable Fights:** David Lemieux (TKO 8), Daniel Jacobs (UD 12), Canelo Alvarez (D 12, L MD 12)

2 DANIEL JACOBS
Age: 31 • **Record:** 34-2 (29 KOs) • **Notable Fights:** Caleb Truax (TKO 12), Peter Quillin (TKO 1), Maciej Sulecki (UD 12)

3 BILLY JOE SAUNDERS
Age: 29 • **Record:** 26-0 (12 KOs) • **Notable Fights:** Chris Eubank Jr. (SD 12), Andy Lee (MD 12), David Lemieux (UD 12)

4 SERGIY DEREVYANCHENKO
Age: 32 • **Record:** 12-0 (10 KOs) • **Notable Fights:** Sam Soliman (TKO 2), Kemahl Russell (TKO 5), Tureano Johnson (TKO 12)

5 JERMALL CHARLO
Age: 28 • **Record:** 27-0 (21 KOs) • **Notable Fights:** Cornelius Bundrage (TKO 3), Austin Trout (UD 12), Julian Williams (KO 5)

2

3

4

5

nothing but continued success. I don't know a lot about the kid he's fighting, but I expect (Jacobs) to win."

And there's also a new force at 160 pounds. Jermall Charlo won the IBF junior middleweight title in September 2015 and made three successful defenses. The skills and speed are impressive, as is his habit of producing highlight-reel knockouts that can take your breath away. Now unbeaten in 27 fights with 21 knockouts, Charlo has won two consecutive bouts at middleweight and is looking to take on the division's best.

The outspoken Hopkins, while acknowledging Charlo's massive potential, refused to discuss him "until he's defeated a top-rated middleweight." However, Macklin, clearly impressed, mentioned Charlo before any other 160-pound fighter, and he foresees a bright future for the 28-year-old from Richmond, Texas.

"I think Jermall Charlo is the real deal," offered Macklin in earnest. "He's the middleweight you don't want to fight, because he's coming through and he's hungry. He's not a big marquee name because he's still relatively unproven at this point, but you still know that he can really fight. He's avoided in that sense.

"It was a shame that (Jorge Sebastian) Heiland brought an injury into his fight with Charlo, because that would have given us a good indication of his ability at middleweight. But Charlo knocked out Julian Williams at 154 pounds, and these guys are really good fighters. They haven't had the hype of a Canelo or a Golovkin, but it's like a new era of fighters that Charlo has been looking good against. A lot of guys in the gyms in America have told me that he's for real – they're raving about him."

Charlo is currently awaiting a date and an opponent, but rounding out a busy October for the middleweights is Ryota Murata and Rob Brant, who will fight in Las Vegas on October 20. Murata, a big star in Japan, has avenged his only loss to Hassan N'Dam (seen by many as a robbery) and is now closing in on a legitimate world title shot (he currently holds the WBA "regular" belt). Brant, perhaps unwisely, moved up to 168 pounds for the World Boxing Super Series last year and was soundly outpointed by the much larger Juergen Braehmer. The middleweight division makes a lot more sense for the Minnesota native.

As previously stated, however, it's Canelo Alvarez who sits atop the middleweight throne. Will we see a trilogy with the great Golovkin? Will we see new rivalries formed against Jacobs or Saunders? Will an upcoming middleweight star like Charlo or Murata secure a huge payday against the sport's biggest pay-per-view draw? It's highly likely that all of the above will have to wait, but Alvarez has never backed down from a challenge, and it's unlikely that he's going to start now.

"I would like to see Canelo in with David Lemieux in Montreal or at Madison Square Garden," said Hopkins of what would be an all-Golden Boy Promotions clash. "Then, providing Danny Jacobs wins against Derevyanchenko, you could have another huge event. I mentioned that fight after Canelo beat Golovkin, and someone looked at me and said, 'Bernard, that's a great fight. It's like a middleweight tournament.'

"All these young middleweights are chomping at the bit right now, and they should be. And just because these fighters are young and well-known doesn't mean they're the greatest thing since sliced bread. It just means the pay-per-view is big. It means business is big because people know them and they'll pay to watch. Canelo is in the position to make these young guys marquee moneymakers. But it's all about Canelo right now."

Yes, Alvarez has the ball, and it's going to be very difficult to take it away from him. RING

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After 12 rounds with Aston Palicte, Donnie Nietes rightfully celebrated a performance that should've made him a four-division titleholder. If only the judges had gotten it right.

SUPERFAIL

POOR JUDGING DENIED **DONNIE NIETES** A HISTORIC TITLE ON A 'SUPERFLY' CARD THAT STRUGGLED TO LURE FANS

By **Ryan Songalia**

The look on Donnie Nietes' face said it all.

As the 114-114 card from Max DeLuca was read out, bewilderment and disbelief flushed over him. His bid to become a titleholder in a fourth division – a distinction only accomplished by two Philippine-born boxers, Manny Pacquiao and Nonito Donaire – was thwarted by what HBO commentator Max Kellerman described as "two horrible scorecards, one unthinkably bad."

Against Aston Palicte, a younger, larger, and hungry contender, Nietes sought to do more with less through counterpunching. What Palicte lacked in craft, he made up for with activity. But it was Nietes who made the biggest statement in the 12th round, hurting Palicte several times with right hands to the jaw. The first card had Palicte, a first-time challenger also from the Philippines, ahead 116-112, while the second had Nietes by a wide margin, 118-110, resulting in a split draw.

"I won, but the judges didn't give me the decision," said Nietes afterward. As subtle in his expressions out of the ring as he is in the ring, Nietes kept his disappointment to himself. Once backstage at The Forum, Nietes stared at the wall before turning to his promoter, Michael Aldeguer.

"He said, 'Sir, what can we do? The judges scored it that way,'" Aldeguer recalls. "He's very sad, he's very down. He worked so hard."

Without "Superfly" stars Srisaket Sor Rungvisai and Roman Gonzalez, the Nicaraguan banger whose success kickstarted HBO's newfound infatuation with smaller boxers, Tom Loeffler of 360 Promotions had to scramble to put together a card that lived up to the high bar set by the first two installments of the series. Superfly 1 and Superfly 2 were a refreshing spotlight on an underexposed division teeming with diverse talent, born from the radical concept of showing compelling matchups, even if they take place in a smaller weight category.

Instead of bringing further clarity to the division, Superfly 3 showcased the division's other players in a holding pattern after 115-pound RING champion Sor Rungvisai opted instead to sign a co-promotional deal with mixed martial arts company One Championship, which will promote his October 6 optional defense against Iran Diaz. Gonzalez, who walked into Superfly 1 in September 2017 at the top of the pound-for-pound list, continues on the road back from consecutive losses.

The burden of headlining fell to Juan Francisco Estrada, the only fighter who had been featured on the previous two cards. The former unified flyweight titleholder had given Gonzalez his hardest fight at 108 pounds and had nearly toppled Sor Rungvisai in February, and this time was paired with an unheralded Mexican named Felipe Orucuta in a fight aimed at building anticipation for a second fight with the Thai. Instead, Estrada had to deal with an awkward, durable foe looking to make a name at his expense, and he looked vulnerable before taking control late against the underdog. It was the most underwhelming performance Estrada has turned in since his ho-hum win over Jobert Alvarez four years earlier, and it did little to raise his stock.

Estrada had been a respected titleholder at 112 pounds, but he's not Marco Antonio Barrera or Erik Morales in terms of popularity, as evidenced by the steep decline in attendance. The inaugural show at StubHub Center in Carson, California, drew an announced 7,418 and rose to 7,827 when the show moved to The Forum in Inglewood. Superfly 3 drew only 4,019. The absence of a marquee matchup also led to a dip in television

PRIDE OF THE PHILIPPINES

TO BE CALLED ONE OF THE 10 BEST FROM THIS ARCHIPELAGIC NATION IS A HIGH HONOR IN THE SPORT OF BOXING. HERE'S THE LIST, IN NO PARTICULAR ORDER:

MANNY PACQUIAO - The Boxing Writers Association of America (BWAA) Fighter of the Decade for the 2000s. Only boxer to win world titles in eight divisions. Defeated Marco Antonio Barrera, Erik Morales, Juan Manuel Marquez, Miguel Cotto and many more. Pacquiao is the GOAT of Philippine boxing.

PANCHO VILLA - The first ever Filipino champion and first champ ever from Asia, Villa knocked out the legendary Jimmy Wilde in 1923 to win the world flyweight championship. The whirlwind brawler held the title until his death at just age 23.

FLASH ELORDE - Elorde ended the Philippines' 35-year championship drought after Pancho Villa died in 1925. Elorde won the world junior lightweight title in 1960, held it until 1967, and is one of only three Filipinos inducted into the International Boxing Hall of Fame (alongside Villa and promoter Lope Sarreal).

NONITO DONAIRE - Donaire is the only other Asian boxer besides Pacquiao to win BWAA Fighter of the Year. He won titles in four divisions, earning two major bantamweight belts and unifying two titles (plus winning the vacant Ring championship) at 122 pounds. "The Filipino Flash" used his lightning-quick left hook to score The Ring's Knockout of the Year in 2007 and 2011 against Vic Darchinyan and Fernando Montiel, respectively.

GERRY PENALOSA - A former WBC junior bantamweight and WBO bantamweight titleholder, Penalosa was called "the best technical boxer from the Philippines" by trainer Freddie Roach himself. A masterful counterpuncher with a withering body attack, Penalosa is one of the few boxers who can claim that Pacquiao was his sparring partner.

LUISITO ESPINOSA - Known as "Lindol," or "Earthquake," Espinosa sent seismic waves through the sport with his first-round knockout of Khaokor Galaxy in 1989 to win the WBA bantamweight title. He would later defeat Manuel Medina for the WBC featherweight title and made it to HBO's airwaves in a brutal second-round knockout of Kennedy McKinney.

BEN VILLAFLOR - Born in Zamboanga City, Villaflor later established himself as a popular attraction in Hawaii during the 1970s. He won the WBA junior lightweight title twice, winning it back from Kuniaki Shibata with a first-round left hook that put the Japanese fighter out cold.

CEFERINO GARCIA - Garcia, recognized as the middleweight champ by the state of California at the time, held the great Henry Armstrong to a draw in 1940. He also fought Fred Apostoli and Barney Ross but is perhaps best known as the fighter credited with inventing the bolo punch.

BRIAN VILORIA - A 2000 U.S. Olympian, the Filipino-American won a 108-pound belt twice and later became the first boxer in decades to unify the flyweight title.

DONNIE NIETES - Whether he wins another title or not, being a titleholder at three weights – and The Ring champion at 108 pounds – solidifies his place on this list.

viewership, with the Estrada-Orucuta main event averaging 298,000 viewers and peaking at 329,000 – numbers which were about half of those for the Danny Garcia-Shawn Porter card the same night on Showtime, and well below stats achieved by the first two Superfly cards, which peaked in the 700,000-800,000 range.

If the appeal of Superfly is a fighter who normally wouldn't be featured seizing the opportunity, then Kazuto Ioka's appearance was the high point of the third card. The Japanese fighter emerged from 17 months out of the ring after watching the second card and thinking to himself, "Hey, I can beat these guys." Making his U.S. debut, Ioka did just that against McWilliams Arroyo, who had upset two-time Superfly participant Carlos Cuadras in his previous fight. Ioka, who previously held world titles at 105, 108 and 112 pounds, dropped Arroyo at the end of the third round with a right cross – the only knockdown of the televised card – and used his two-fisted body attack and shrewd ring IQ to batter the resilient Puerto Rican en route to a wide decision victory, making him an attractive contender in the division. Loeffler believes that Ioka, like Chocolatito Gonzalez before him, can transcend the weight class to become a major part of HBO's boxing programming.

All of this leads to Superfly 4, eyed by Loeffler for February at The Forum. Still, unresolved questions remain regarding the future of the series and, in turn, the division. Will Sor Rungvisai return to the U.S. to compete if and when he handles business against Diaz? Can Gonzalez regain his old luster against a past-prime Moises Fuentes? And can the series, one of the few bright spots on HBO's gutted boxing programming over the past year, attract other titleholders like Jerwin Ancajas and Khalid Yafai?

"[Sor Rungvisai-Estrada II] would be the plan [for Superfly 4] if the WBC orders the mandatory. That was one of the candidates for Fight of the Year, and it'd be great to do it again next year," said Loeffler, adding that Sor Rungvisai had gone from an "unknown fighter" to one of the sport's elites through his exposure on HBO cards.

Yafai and Ancajas, staples of the streaming platforms DAZN and ESPN+, respectively, may not cross the street just yet, but a card featuring Ioka against Cuadras or Nietes, with Gonzalez back in a significant matchup, could return the franchise to prominence.

Before any talk of part four, though, Nietes had to make peace with his fate from that September night. A day after the fight, his team presented him with a cake appropriately mislabeled with the word "congratulation" in frosting. He'll have to wait to get another chance at accomplishing his dream of joining elite company as a four-division titleholder, but with Superfly giving a platform to an overlooked division, hopes are high. Still, at 36, time is not on his side to cement a legacy among the greats from one of Asia's top fighting countries.

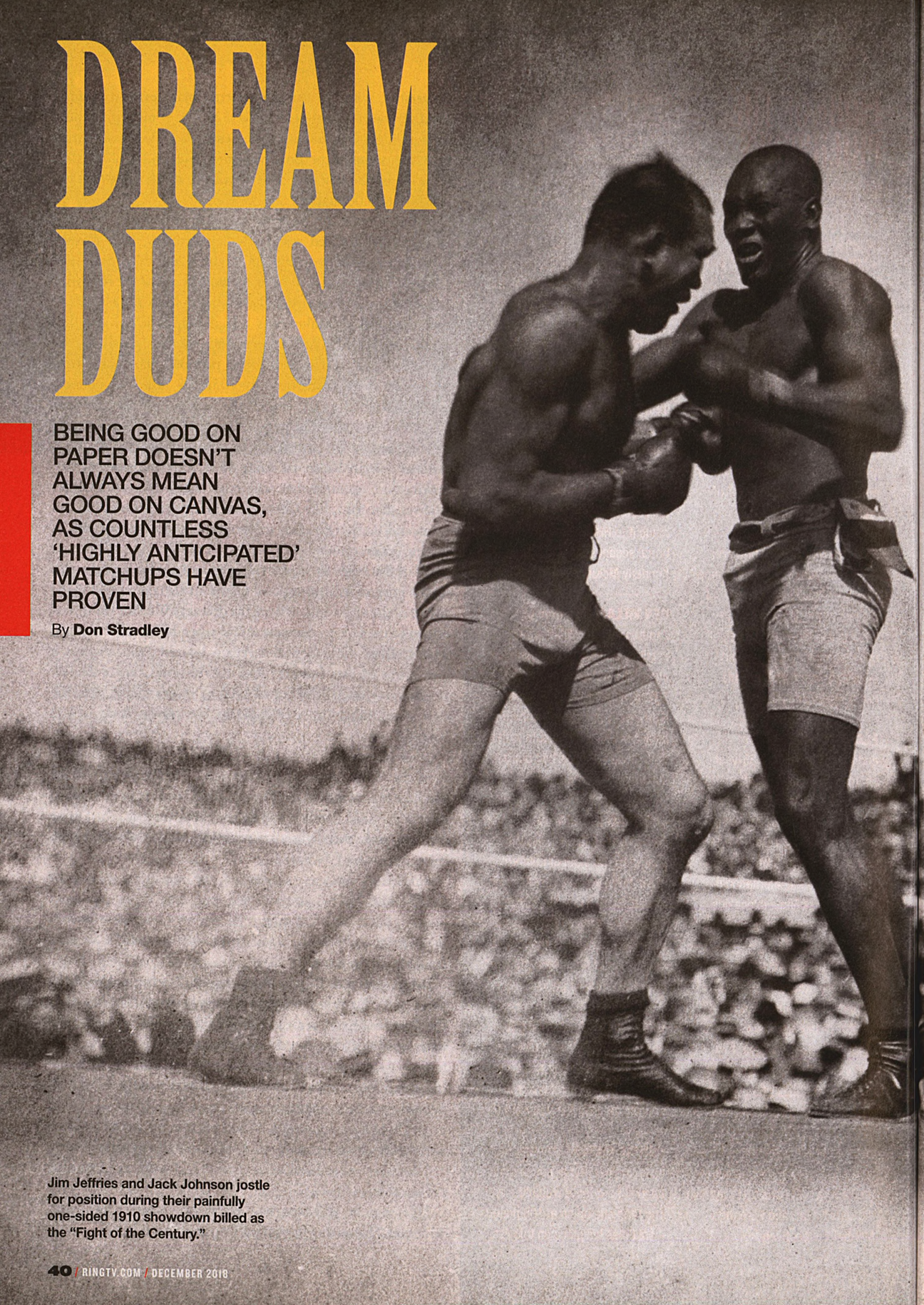
"I'm now feeling like I'm 24 years old," Nietes said, brushing off questions of his age.

"He says he still wants to get it, no matter what," said Aldeguer. "He wants to get that fourth division belt."

DREAM DUDS

BEING GOOD ON PAPER DOESN'T ALWAYS MEAN GOOD ON CANVAS, AS COUNTLESS 'HIGHLY ANTICIPATED' MATCHUPS HAVE PROVEN

By **Don Stradley**



Jim Jeffries and Jack Johnson jostle for position during their painfully one-sided 1910 showdown billed as the "Fight of the Century."

More than a century ago, on a scorching Fourth of July afternoon in Reno, Nevada, an exhausted Jim Jeffries came out for the 15th round against the reigning heavyweight champion, Jack Johnson. Bleeding, and unable to recapture his old form after several years in retirement, Jeffries soon found himself on the canvas, dazed. He rose to his feet, but was knocked down twice more. Jeffries, the former champion once regarded as the strongest man in the country, was done. On behalf of white America, he'd been yanked from the comfort of his alfalfa farm to battle the increasingly unpopular black champion. According to legend, Jeffries spent the days after the bout on a mountain sabbatical, camped out in caves and on rocky ledges, as if to get away from it all. The "white hope" nonsense had been a bit much, even for him.

Regardless of the bout's ugly racial backdrop, the Johnson-Jeffries contest of 1910 was arguably boxing's first "dream fight," in that the event had seemed born in the fantasies of the public. In hindsight, it also set a foreboding precedent for many dream fights to follow: It didn't deliver. Not only did the heralded Jeffries go down in flames, but at a time when the average U.S. worker earned roughly $1 per day, customers had paid up to $50 for a drab, noncompetitive fight. "Faster, better fights may be seen every day of the year," observed author Jack London. Novelist Rex Beach, also at ringside, claimed it was "in reality no fight at all."

In short, despite its significance, Johnson-Jeffries was the first of many dream bouts that left fans wishing they'd saved their money.

Why do dream fights fail so often? Well, there are nearly as many reasons as there are fights. The fault lies partly with the combatants. Their styles may not mesh or, because they have so much respect for each other, they become overly cautious. Maybe, with so many eyes upon them, they suffer a kind of performance anxiety. Even Johnson and Jeffries, as Beach wrote, spent much of their bout "encircling … watching each other warily … as if the fate of a nation hung upon their faintest error." The fans could also be culpable, in that they build the event up in their minds to the point where it can't possibly live up to expectations.

One such letdown took place on August 27, 1943. On that night, more than 15,000 people gathered at Madison Square Garden to see Sugar Ray Robinson take on Henry Armstrong. The combined records of these two ring greats eventually combined for nearly 400 bouts, yet they appeared as rivals only once. Unfortunately, it wasn't a night to remember. In 1970, Armstrong told author Peter Heller, "It was a disgusting fight."

Generally, the bout is regarded as an example of a younger man, Robinson, meeting a past-his-prime legend, Armstrong. This is true to an extent, but Armstrong wasn't exactly like Jeffries, who was returning from a six-year layoff. Armstrong, though a few years removed from his reign as welterweight champion, was

enjoying a seven-fight win streak. After the 10-round bout with Robinson, Armstrong would go 17-3-2 before finally retiring in 1945. So "Homicide Hank" wasn't quite as washed-up as history would have us believe.

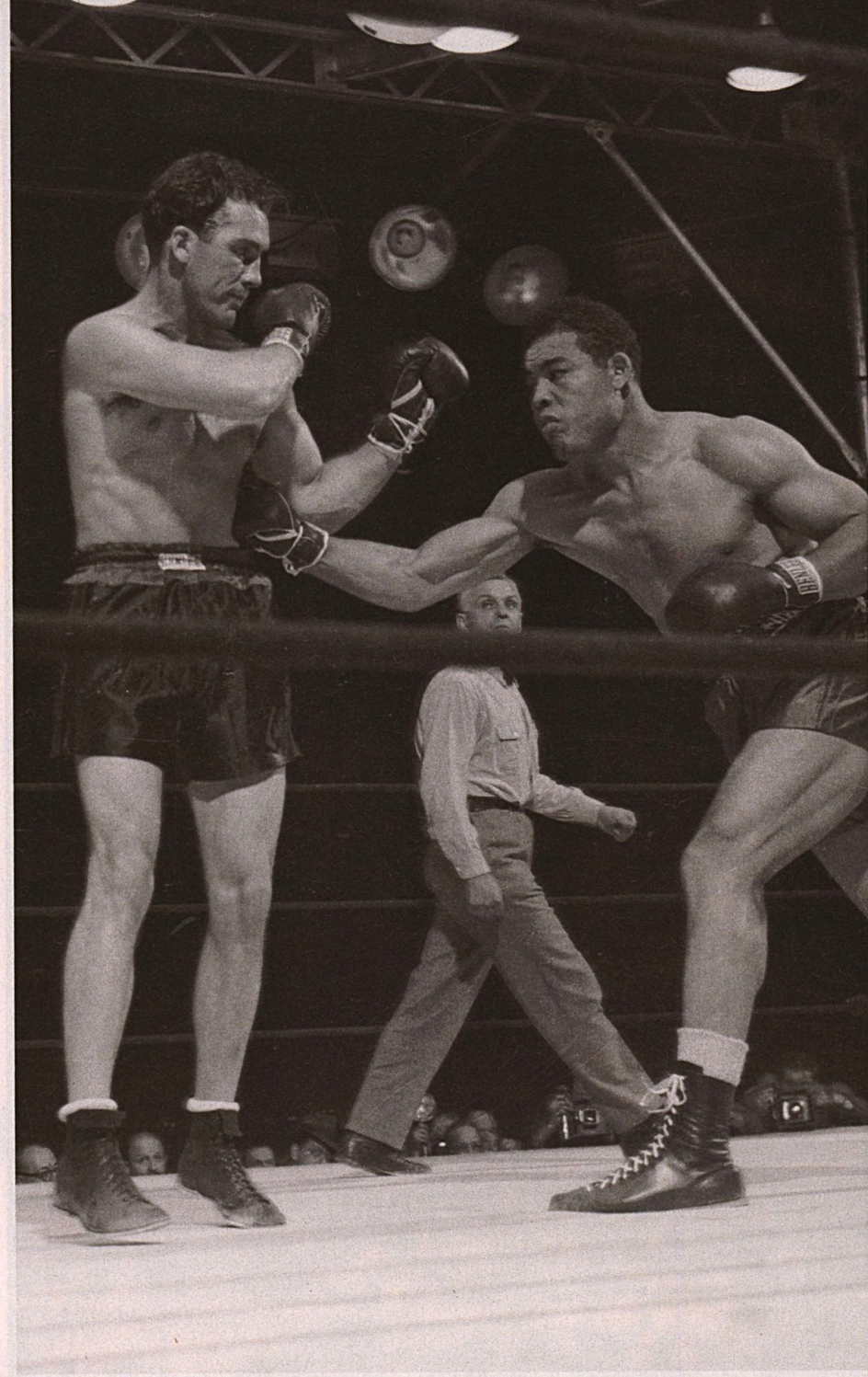
The fight itself, however, was a joke. Robinson backpedaled the whole way, content to jab and win on the scorecards. The United Press called the contest "a stinkeroo," and declared, "Only two good punches were landed during the farce." Later, Robinson said that he hadn't wanted to hurt his hero, and that he'd agreed to the bout only because he'd heard Armstrong needed money. Regardless, the ticket buyers booed throughout.

Can you imagine? Robinson and Armstrong, two names synonymous with greatness, were booed.

Another dream fight that should've remained a dream took place at Yankee Stadium on June 19, 1946. This time the dream belonged to promoter Mike Jacobs, and it involved heavyweight champion Joe Louis and Billy Conn. The first encounter between Louis and Conn in 1941 had been a masterpiece, with Conn boxing beautifully until Louis scored a dramatic 13th-round KO and saved his crown. Jacobs nursed the idea of a return bout for years; both fighters were involved in the war effort, so it wasn't until the summer of 1946 that one of the most eagerly anticipated rematches of the century was made.

Hoping the bout could be boxing's first $3 million gate, Jacobs charged an unheard-of $100 per ringside seat. The press accused Jacobs of swindling the post-war, fight-hungry public, but old "Uncle Mike" plowed ahead, undaunted. The final haul at the box office turned out to be nearly $2 million, far short of Jacobs' daydream, but still the second biggest gate up to that time.

Meanwhile, the war years had indeed taken a toll. Despite Louis winning by KO in the eighth, both men moved sluggishly, like wooden imitations of what they had once been. The Associated Press dubbed Louis-Conn II "as dull a fight as the ring game ever spawned."



Joe Louis lands a right to a faded Billy Conn's ribcage during their disappointing rematch in June 1946.

Notable fights took place on an almost monthly basis during the golden era of the 1980s. But with so many major promotions going on, it was inevitable that a few duds got through. A good example happened on March 18, 1983, at the Atlantic City Convention Hall, when Michael Spinks and Dwight Muhammad Qawi met for what was supposed to be a light heavyweight showdown for the ages.

On paper, the excitement was justified. It was a classic matchup of styles, pitting WBA titlist Spinks, a tall, stand-up puncher from the mean streets of St. Louis, against WBC titleholder Qawi, a crouching dynamo who'd done a stretch for armed robbery at Rahway State Prison. The

bout was the proverbial no-brainer, a full-on fantasy that would come to fruition in the burgeoning fight capital of Atlantic City. With two title belts on the line, the event was billed as "The Brawl For It All."

With rumors that Qawi (still known as Dwight Braxton) was ill during the week of the fight, bookmakers installed Spinks as a 7-5 favorite. Questions abounded. Could Qawi withstand Spinks' poisonous right cross? And would Spinks, whose common-law wife had been killed in an automobile accident two months earlier, be able to focus? Who would land the first bomb? Who would survive? And would it really be, as many pundits were predicting, the greatest bout ever contested at 175 pounds?

To say the fight was a bit of a disappointment is like saying William Shakespeare was a bit wordy. Avoiding Qawi's power the way a germaphobe avoids shaking hands, Spinks boxed carefully and walked out of Atlantic City with a unanimous decision and both belts. As Sports Illustrated reported, the match "hardly did for the light heavyweight division what it was ballyhooed to do – lead it from the shadows to the showcase." Aside from a few desperate attempts from Qawi in the final rounds, nary a bomb was thrown all night.

Eight months later at Caesars Palace in Las Vegas, Marvelous Marvin Hagler and Roberto Duran displayed their own lack of chemistry. Granted, their meeting wasn't a total dud, but as far as fireworks, this pairing of dangerous pugs was an abysmal failure.

How these future Hall of Famers came to fight was a fluke in itself. Hagler, though undisputed middleweight champion, had yet to find that always-elusive state known as "stardom." Enter Duran, who was enjoying a resurgence after KO wins over Pipino Cuevas and Davey Moore (which earned Duran the WBA junior middleweight belt). Though he was a former lightweight campaigning at 154, Duran allegedly ran into Hagler at an event and said, "You aren't so big. I'll fight you next." Both camps were amenable, and so it was that Duran, whose cojones were never in question, prepared to face the most sinister middleweight ruler that boxing had seen in years.

Hagler came into the ring as a 4-1 favorite, but to the puzzlement of all, he fought Duran with something less than his usual vigor. Duran, meanwhile, was content to lay back and counterpunch. It was, wrote veteran SI correspondent William Nack, "a strange fight, with small eddies and currents that made it difficult to score." Hagler was so restrained that it appeared Duran might pull off an upset, albeit a dull one. Sensing Duran was stealing the fight, Hagler hustled during the last rounds and retained his title with a narrow 15-round unanimous decision. The performance, however, didn't have the desired effect of making the bald one a star. All it did was inspire sportswriters to write, ad nauseam, "Marvin wasn't so marvelous."

Still, Hagler has often mentioned this bout as his proudest achievement, probably due to it being his first major payday. Fans were disenchanted, but Hagler thought this dream fight was a dream come true.

Mike Tyson took part in many fiascos, but on March 7, 1987, at the Las Vegas Hilton, he and James "Bonecrusher" Smith put on one of the biggest duds ever. This one was so bad that you might not remember that it had been a dream fight of sorts. It was certainly the stuff from which dreams are made, involving two big hitters, each claiming a title belt. It promised to be a heavyweight war, the likes of which hadn't been seen since George Foreman and Ron Lyle engaged in their epic, multi-knockdown encounter 11 years earlier.

The dream factor was based on Smith's first-round knockout of Tim Witherspoon three months prior, a shocking achievement that earned him the WBA heavyweight strap and a unification bout with new WBC titleholder Tyson, who happened to be the latest and greatest attraction in the business. The undefeated Tyson, though not yet 21 years old, looked to be a legend in the making. Smith, though he'd had an uneven career, had the size and punching power to provide a legitimate challenge for the young bruiser, not to mention a nickname that sounded like something from a cartoon or a Sylvester Stallone movie. The bout was quickly arranged as part of an ongoing HBO heavyweight series, and no less than Muhammad Ali appeared in promotional clips that aired before the fight.

Smith, however, didn't live up to his end of the dream.

Whenever Tyson moved in, Smith would simply wrap his long arms around him and hang on like an octopus. Tyson, showing his own lack of experience, was dumbstruck by Smith's non-style. Round after round, the best "Iron Mike" could do was land a couple of punches, and then submit to Smith's embrace. It was only in the closing seconds of the final round that Smith showed any aggression, landing a right to the jaw that made Tyson wobble. If only Bonecrusher had done it sooner. It might've given him the confidence to make a fight of it. As it was, Tyson won a unanimous 12-round decision.

"He was just trying to survive," Tyson said.

And the customers were trying to stay awake.

There have been plenty of other dream duds. Leonard-Duran III came to mind, as did Tyson-Spinks, Trinidad-De La Hoya and Hopkins-Jones II. Even if you've only been watching boxing for a short time, you've already experienced the biggest dream fight flop of 'em all, the Mayweather-Pacquiao bout of 2015. The less said about that one, the better.

Obviously, there will be more dream bouts to come. Some will be memorable. Some will be disgraces. You'll have to take your chances.

What's important is that we keep dreaming.

SOULMATES

HEATHER HARDY AND **SHELLY VINCENT** ARE DEEPLY BOUND FOREVER BY WHAT TRANSPIRED IN THEIR EXPLOSIVE FIRST FIGHT … JUST DON'T EXPECT THEM TO BE HOLDING HANDS AT THE REMATCH IN OCTOBER

By **Thomas Gerbasi**

Heather Hardy and Shelly Vincent engage in one of the many violent exchanges during their hotly contested 10-rounder in 2016, which Hardy won by majority decision.

EDWARD DILLER

If any fight demanded an immediate rematch, it was the showdown between Heather Hardy and Shelly Vincent. But after Brooklyn's Hardy won a majority decision victory over Providence's Vincent in a war on the Coney Island Boardwalk that earned The Ring's Female Fight of the Year award in 2016, there was silence.

Then, two years later, came the sudden announcement that the two will throw hands again, this time on the October 27 undercard of the Daniel Jacobs-Sergiy Derevyanchenko title fight in New York City.

"I didn't want the rematch to happen unless it made sense," said Hardy, who has not only improved her record to 21-0 with three wins since the first fight, but also entered the world of mixed martial arts, where she

has won two of three bouts. So when the idea of meeting Vincent again came up, Hardy had three items on her wish list.

"Are you gonna put us on TV, are we gonna make some money and is it gonna be for a world title? Those were my three big ones."

She laughs.

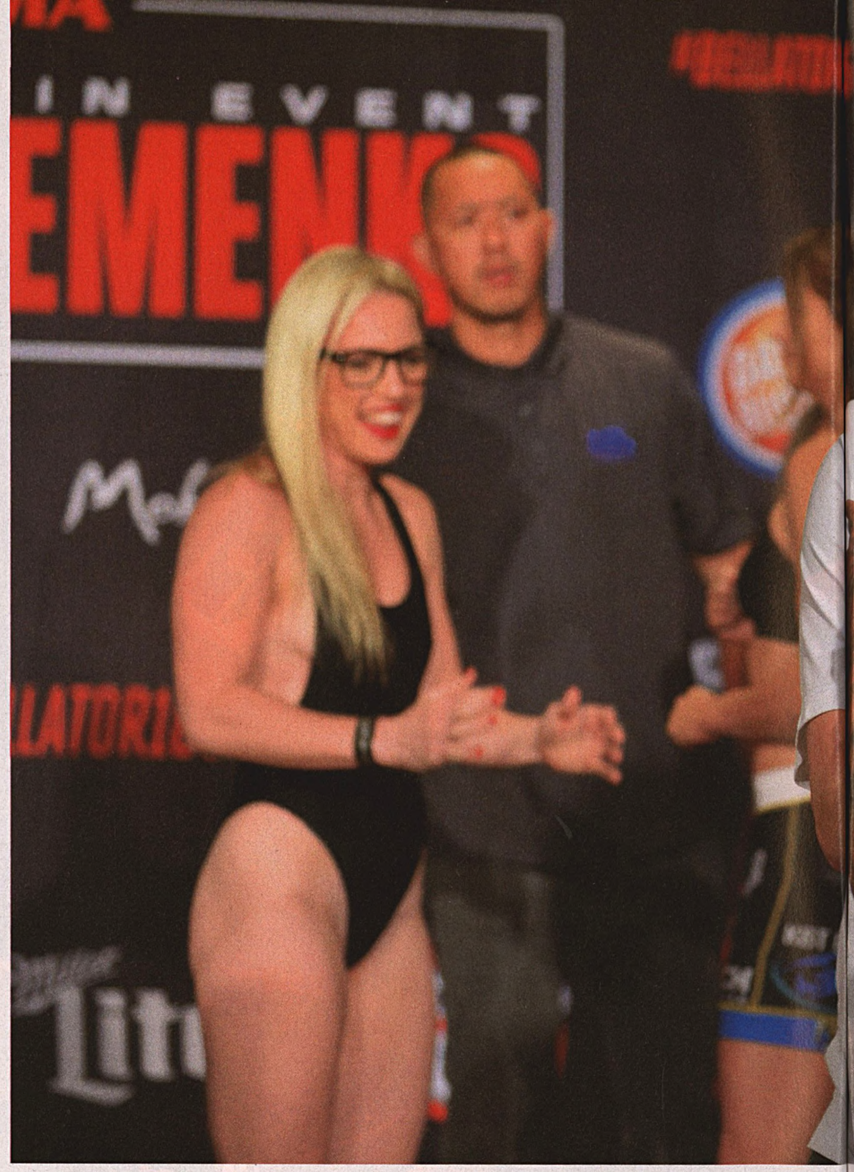
"So I got one out of three. No, I'm not making a lot of money. No, it ain't gonna be on TV. But it is gonna be for the WBO featherweight title, and that really sweetened the pot for me."

That's because Hardy is a fighter. So is Vincent. And that doesn't just refer to what happens between the ropes. Both have come up the hard way in the sport, had to battle through traumas in life, and while you might look at them as polar opposites, they're more alike than different.

So when years of bad blood and social media sniping led to their first fight on three weeks' notice, it was the rare grudge match that delivered, with 10 rounds of toe-to-toe action leaving the crowd roaring for more.

"We both really disliked each other with a passion; her fans were coming at me, my fans were coming at her, and it was more than me and her at that point," recalled Vincent. "It was New York versus New England, and we went in there and we fought. You could tell that we didn't like each other and we were trying to hurt each other, and it was nonstop punching. And that's what people want to see – they either want to see knockouts or they want to see wars, and it did live up to the hype."

"I think we were fighting on our own fire," said Hardy. "We were fighting on passion, on a will to win, on a will not to lose. That fight was all heart and all soul. I can't speak for her, but I can say that I didn't leave anything in the ring. I didn't walk out of that ring wishing I did this or that. I put it all out there, and I'm sure she would say the same. I think that's what made it so special, because neither one of us quit and it was nonstop for 10 rounds."



ICON SPORTSWIRE

When the judges rendered their verdict, it was 99-91, 97-93 and 95-95 in favor of "The Heat," with the first two scores clearly not reflecting the nip-and-tuck nature of the bout. It was one of those fights that could have gone either way, and Vincent, who acquired the "1" on her 23-1 record, does not mince words when it comes to her thoughts on the decision.

"Yeah, it was close, but I don't see her winning," she said. "I felt like they didn't count my body work. She would catch me with one or two shots from the outside, but I would throw combinations. It did go back and forth, but I thought I won six rounds and I thought she clearly beat me in two rounds, and the other two rounds were close. Everybody sees it a little bit different, and I can't worry about that anymore. I'll accept the loss, and now that's gonna give me the fuel to really fuck her shit up this time."

Those are fighting words, but a funny thing happened after August 21, 2016. While you wouldn't put Hardy and Vincent in the same room together before that date, in the days following their 10-rounder, it was the opposite of the rivalry between Gennady Golovkin and Canelo Alvarez. Instead of going from respect to disdain, Hardy and Vincent found a common ground that can only be found after a fistfight.

"It's like the Gatti-Ward story," Hardy said. "They never put on a bad fight, but you see the clips of them after these epic wars feeding each other water and sharing a towel. I think when you go in the ring with someone for 10 rounds and give your soul ..."

Hardy pauses, then continues.

"My soul came out in that fight, and I know Shelly's did too. She can deny this from now until her last day of breathing, but she respects me the same way I respect her. And it goes beyond what I've been through and who I am as a fighter. It's because of what we did in that ring. We shared something. And something happened that night that changed whatever was before. And if we fight again or again and again and again, I think it's always gonna be like that. Our legacies are intertwined forever."

"Everything that I felt boxing-wise, I still feel," Vincent said of Hardy. "But I respect Heather a lot as a person now and I don't hate her anymore. If my soul could look into a mirror, I feel like it would probably be Heather Hardy because we've both been through so much. On the inside I feel like we're so much alike. Before, I didn't take the time to see what she was about, and I'm sure she didn't take the time to see what I was about."

The promoter of both featherweights, Lou DiBella, also compared the two to Arturo Gatti and Micky Ward before their first meeting, and it's an accurate read for the simple reason that no matter how they felt or feel about each other personally, Hardy and Vincent will seemingly always put on a fight to remember. And while some initially dismissed Gatti and Ward for not being on the pound-for-pound list or fighting for world titles during their classic trilogy, all that really matters is what happened when the bell rang over 30 epic rounds.

Hardy and Vincent earned each other's respect during their first fight, but they remain rivals. Vincent fiercely believes she won bout No. 1.

So even if Vincent admits that, at 39, injuries are becoming an increased annoyance, and the 36-year-old Hardy doesn't shy away from the reality that she has more fights behind her than ahead of her at this point, if they will fight again for the championship of each other, nothing matters more than delivering a repeat of one of the best women's fights of all time.

How that rematch ends is open to debate, though.

"I don't think we're gonna need a third one," said Hardy. "This one's gonna get a stamp on it way bigger than the first one did. I think what a lot of people don't understand was that I started boxing at the end of 2010 and I turned pro in 2012. So by the time I met Shelly, I was in my boxing infancy. I was just going into high school, so to speak. And she had 20 years under her belt. Not to say that she couldn't improve, but my last two years of improving are likely gonna be a bigger jump than hers."

"The difference is, I think everybody's gonna see the same Heather, but everybody's gonna see a different Shelito," counters Vincent. "I clearly see the things I did wrong in that fight, and this time my hands are gonna be all over her like that's my woman, and once they get on there, they're not coming off."

Vincent laughs, ready to get in the last punch and the last word.

"What do they say in Brooklyn? 'Never ran, never will.' She's got to give the fans what they want and she's gotta step to me. We've gotta fight."

FIGHT ROUNDUP

BY **BRIAN HARTY**

RECENT ACTION AND FUTURE SIGNIFICANCE

DAVID LEMIEUX KO 1 GARY O'SULLIVAN

Sept. 15, T-Mobile Arena, Las Vegas

It couldn't compete with the main event in terms of pure, steaming animosity, but the "other" middleweight fight on the Canelo Alvarez-Gennady Golovkin 2 card had its share of nastiness in the buildup. It was difficult to care about taking a side, as hard as YouTubers tried to squeeze hits from what was mostly a crude and uncreative dump of name-calling, but there actually was an important storyline ...

David Lemieux was one fight removed from looking painfully one-dimensional in his loss to Billy Joe Saunders in December 2017, and his comeback opponent, Karim Achour, had gone the distance on his feet, so some professional opiners opined that the 29-year-old Canadian was no longer the man who had begun his career with a string of 20 knockouts (in fact he'd only scored two KOs in the six fights since getting owned by Golovkin in 2015) and was near retirement.

Meanwhile, Ireland's 34-year-old "Spike" O'Sullivan, who claimed John L. Sullivan as an ancestor and had the waxed facial hair to prove it, was riding a wave of popularity following televised knockouts of Antoine Douglas and Berlin Abreu. O'Sullivan promised he'd end Lemieux's career and Lemieux promised he'd shut O'Sullivan up, and both promised they'd do it with a knockout.

David Lemieux dropped Gary O'Sullivan so hard with his vaunted hook that "Spike" may have been looking for his mustache on the canvas.

TOM HOGAN

Roman Gonzalez recaptured some of his P4P mojo while bludgeoning Moises Fuentes.

With the stench of trash talk in the air, the fighters entered the arena, and at first impression it seemed like Lemieux had accepted his fate as he walked in somberly to Frank Sinatra's "My Way." Bernard Hopkins had used the song as a warning to his enemies, but with Lemieux it seemed more like the background music for a slow-dissolving montage at a memorial. Spike, on the other hand, swaggered in playing to the crowd, the curled tips of his mustache painting a perma-smirk that paired well with his bravado. Or hubris.

And that's about as far as this fight report can be drawn out. Once the bell rang, the barrel-esque Lemieux (he somehow came in 15 pounds heavier than his adversary) hammered O'Sullivan with a little bit of everything from the power-punch category – notably wince-inducing left hooks – while the hapless Irishman tried to fend him off with jabs. With 25 seconds remaining in the first round, O'Sullivan turned Lemieux's face sideways with one such jab and attempted to follow it with an overhand right, but the jab had done nothing to avert the left hook that was already on its way to Spike's cheekbone. Once it landed, all of O'Sullivan's intentions went dark and he spun into a collapse, his right glove fanning past Lemieux's head as dead weight.

Asked if there was a lesson in all this, Lemieux (40-4, 34 KOs) simply said, "Don't piss me off, guys." And who will get the next chance to not piss him off? Lemieux said he was looking forward to facing the winner of the main event, which turned out to be his Golden Boy stablemate, so a cross-continental Canada vs. Mexico showdown could be next.

ROMAN GONZALEZ TKO 5 MOISES FUENTES

Sept. 15, T-Mobile Arena, Las Vegas

At only 5-foot-3, Roman Gonzalez was once the biggest man in boxing. Defying all precedence, "Chocolatito" had won titles in boxing's three lowest weight classes, and with a combination of sublime skills and punching power had risen all the way to the top of the pound-for-pound mountain before winning a belt in a fourth division. Then he experienced a 15½-round free fall and landed on his back in the middle of a ring in Carson, California.

This was Gonzalez's first time fighting since his grueling 46-plus minutes with Srisaket Sor Rungvisai – two fights, two losses, the second a brutal fourth-round knockout – and he was clearly not the same fighter who'd worn the crown just 18 months earlier. He was a little sluggish and off the mark, almost like a normal person doing an impression of a prime Gonzalez. He'd once pursued his victims with an eagerness to finish one punch so he could get to the next; in other fighters it would be called killer instinct, but in the humble Nicaraguan it was more

like an artist's compulsion to release a masterpiece. That intensity was gone, and one can only assume it was as much due to wounded confidence as the physical damage reaped in his 48 previous fights.

But Moises Fuentes was a good choice. The former strawweight titleholder lacked the threatening power of Gonzalez's Thai nemesis and had been knocked out by flyweight titleholder Daigo Higa in his most recent fight. A nomad when it comes to weight classes, Fuentes had jumped up to junior bantamweight for the opportunity to fight on the Canelo-GGG 2 undercard and looked like a solid gauge. If he proved to be too difficult, then Gonzalez had definitely declined, perhaps irrevocably.

Unfortunately for Fuentes, he bonked heads with Gonzalez in the second round and it opened up a cut that soon became a faucet pouring blood from above his right eye. Whether it was seeing the wound, its effect on his opponent's eyesight or simply the act of reconnecting with his vocation, Gonzalez began to shed flakes of rust as the rounds went by. He began throwing more punches and mixed body shots into combinations that became increasingly intricate. His accuracy improved. His ability to anticipate and slip counterattacks quickened and the eagerness to deliver pressure crept back into his footwork. He reaffirmed his power with the right cross that finished Fuentes midway through the fifth round. And he also reaffirmed the compassion that has always been so incredible in somebody so destructive when, rather than celebrate, he was kneeling beside Fuentes even before referee Robert Byrd got there.

It wasn't vintage Gonzalez (47-2, 39 KOs), but it was damn good – enough to put him back in the mix of promoter Tom Loeffler's "Superfly" series, which saw a dip in popularity in its third incarnation without the star power of a Gonzalez-Sor Rungvisai rivalry. A trilogy with the Thai tank would be extremely dangerous, but Chocolatito may yet have another run in him.

JAIME MUNGUIA TKO 3 BRANDON COOK

Sept. 15, T-Mobile Arena, Las Vegas

Still just 21 years old but with a 31-0 (26 KOs) record on his CV, Jaime Munguia continues to provide an X-ray of the matchmaking process for a marquee fighter-in-the-making. In this outing, the final bout before the Canelo-GGG main event, Munguia's assignment was scaled back so he could solidify his confidence after a tough challenge from Liam Smith in July.

The most valuable thing Munguia learned during 12 rounds with Smith is that he (Munguia) is a very large, young, strong junior middleweight, and that

Jaime Munguia had little trouble in defeating a game but overmatched and undersized Brandon Cook.

he shouldn't be shy about rudely shoving those attributes in his opponent's face. He looked like a giant next to Cook, who was 11 years older but less experienced, so the only credible threat to a knockout victory for the youthful Mexican was the magnitude of the event itself. And knowing how a fighter performs on the biggest possible stage is another crucial piece of the matchmaker's puzzle.

There were no surprises as Munguia glided forward behind rapid-fire jabs and portentous power shots, and the first round ended with Cook getting pummeled in the corner. The game Canadian tried to assert himself in the second, but left hooks to the body and big, flush rights forced him into reverse and the session ended the same as before. The one-sided bout concluded just over a minute into Round 3 when referee Tony Weeks stepped into a flurry to intervene.

So now Munguia has the title, he has kept his cool under the bright lights and every statistic is on his side – particularly that aforementioned size. He's 6 feet tall with the frame and the power to carry more weight, so a jump to 160 or beyond is likely. And just like co-attractions Canelo and Lemieux, he's got a close relationship with Golden Boy (through Mexico-based Zanfer Promotions), so if fights against Jermell Charlo and Jarrett Hurd at 154 prove too difficult to make, the arrival of a new middleweight player might be just a couple more strategic matches away.

SHAWN PORTER UD 12 DANNY GARCIA

Sept. 8, Barclays Center, Brooklyn, New York

Please excuse the lapse into first-person, but I feel it's important for me to say up front that I never enjoyed watching Shawn Porter fight. No problem with the man himself – I'd book him as the keynote speaker at a convention for likable people any day – but there's a reason why commentators always bring up his past life as a high school football player. He lowers

Shawn Porter boxed a disciplined fight (by his standards) en route to a narrow points win over Danny Garcia.

BILL TOMPKINS

his head and hurls himself at his foes with a relentless, mauling style more suitable for turf and a pair of cleats. And I always thought those opponents were unfairly criticized for holding, because what else are you supposed to do when a blanket with a serious case of static cling suddenly starts throwing punches at you?

But Porter changed my mind against Danny Garcia. He even said after the fight that a stylistic change was the plan, to win without roughing up Garcia, and he'd followed it – mostly. For the first few rounds, there was something rarely seen in a Shawn Porter fight: space. Instead of watching a four-legged knot bashing around the ring, I saw the man from Ohio steering wide to fly past Garcia while strafing him with jabs. It was a little confusing. Garcia probably didn't know what to make of it either, but he stayed loose and tried to knock the jabs down with his left hand as they came.

Then Garcia scored with a big right in the third round and Porter's stylistic departure ended for the time being. After all, he has built a very successful career on pressure, volume and more pressure, falling short – and just barely – against only two fighters: Kell Brook and Keith Thurman, both highly accurate counterpunchers with power who knew when to grab the blanket and hold on.

Garcia, also a highly accurate puncher, touted the power in his left hook as an antidote to Porter's frenetic charges, but never had much chance to use it. He was selective with his punches and landed a higher percentage of them, but it wasn't enough to overcome the volume disparity; by CompuBox's reckoning, Garcia finished the night with a total of 472 punches thrown while Porter banked 742, including an eighth round in which he threw a career-high 96. And there was variety; uppercuts and body shots in close quarters were key, but he never fully abandoned his boxing experiment either. The result was a multi-faceted performance from Porter, and it mixed with Garcia's style to produce a close contest and some good toe-to-toe exchanges, especially in an excellent 10th round. There was still some ugly grappling and the obligatory head clash, but personally I came away with a new appreciation for Porter's game. He won by scores of 116-112, 115-113 and 115-113.

With the WBC welterweight belt freshly buckled around his waist, Porter (29-2-1, 17 KOs) said he'd prepared for Garcia by studying Marvelous Marvin Hagler's performance against Sugar Ray Leonard in 1987, hoping to emulate the Hard-Headed One's hustle. And while he succeeded in paying tribute to his notoriously surly idol during the fight, Porter was back in likable mode when Errol Spence Jr. appeared in the ring for the friendliest call-out of all time. "Hello, sir," said Spence, who then described the potential unification as "the easiest fight to make in boxing," since promoter-wise he and Porter are on the same team.

If that's true and that fight happens, then it will be a pleasure to watch.

WORLD BEAT

Despite his new relationship with veteran trainer Joe Goossen, Amir Khan remains as vulnerable (due to shaky whiskers) as he is fast and skilled.

U.K.

BY GARETH A DAVIES

There is little argument that Amir Khan has star quality, resonates in British life and remains a mainstream sporting commodity. From his Olympic medal as a teenager to becoming a totemic figure in the British Asian and British Muslim communities, to having done so much for his demographic as a philanthropist and personality, Khan deserves great accolades.

But with six years having passed since he last held a world title, there is one reality check needed: The once-junior welterweight beltholder is beginning to look every bit of his 31 years, and it showed against Samuel Vargas in early September in the city of Birmingham. The 8,000 fans there screamed at his every move, and held their hands to their faces when he was floored in the second round and clipped again on wobbly legs at the close of the 10th.

Yes, it was only Khan's first proper fight in 30 months, since being viciously KO'd at middleweight by Canelo Alvarez; 39 seconds against Phil Lo Greco in April of this year in his comeback fight was far too little to go on. But Khan was pressed for 12 rounds by Vargas and, regardless of winning easily on the cards, was easy to hit and vulnerable. I am convinced he would have finished Vargas three years ago by the midway point.

Ambition burns brightly in Khan, a fearless warrior, but with the last four years of his career spent chasing the big fight with Floyd Mayweather – that never materialized – and the fallout from the night he collided with Canelo's right hand, it looks like a last hurrah against either Manny Pacquiao or Kell Brook is all that is truly left. Forget Errol Spence, Danny Garcia, Keith Thurman, Shawn Porter and Terence Crawford.

Khan favors a fight with the Filipino politico-boxing legend Pacquiao for his legacy and the fight with Brook for British bragging rights. Both have resonance. Khan would prefer Pacquiao over Brook, yet Brook is the easier fight to make.

Promoter Eddie Hearn – he handles Khan and Brook right now – would like to sign Pacquiao and would like to create a triangle of fights. Either fight would be very difficult for Khan, in my view, in spite of him being prepared to fight at 147 pounds.

It's worth noting that on the undercard in Birmingham was a thoroughly entertaining 12-round battle for the British middleweight crown between Jason Welborn and Tommy Langford. They gave their all over 36 minutes, with Welborn retaining the belt once held by Randolph Turpin, Alan Minter, Darren Barker, Matt Macklin and Billy Joe Saunders.

★★★

Not content with megadeals with Sky Sports, Sky Box Office, DAZN in the USA and a huge stable of fighters, Matchroom Boxing promoter Eddie Hearn is on a tear securing signatures and contracts. While targeting Pacquiao may create a trifecta with Brook

and Khan, Hearn's acquisition of undisputed cruiserweight world champion Aleksandr Usyk – for a November 10 title defense against Tony Bellew in Manchester, and perhaps future heavyweight showdowns with Dillian Whyte and Anthony Joshua – shows ambition as a creator in the sport.

Usyk will team up with Matchroom alongside K2 Promotions, with the Bellew fight to be shown live on Sky Sports and streaming giant DAZN. The Ukrainian pound-for-pound star took the WBO and WBC belts into the World Boxing Super Series final against Murat Gassiev in July, where a 12-round master class earned him the IBF, WBA and Ring belts. In comprehensively outclassing Gassiev, the London 2012 Olympic gold medalist created history by becoming the first man in the cruiserweight division to hold all four sanctioning organization world titles at one time.

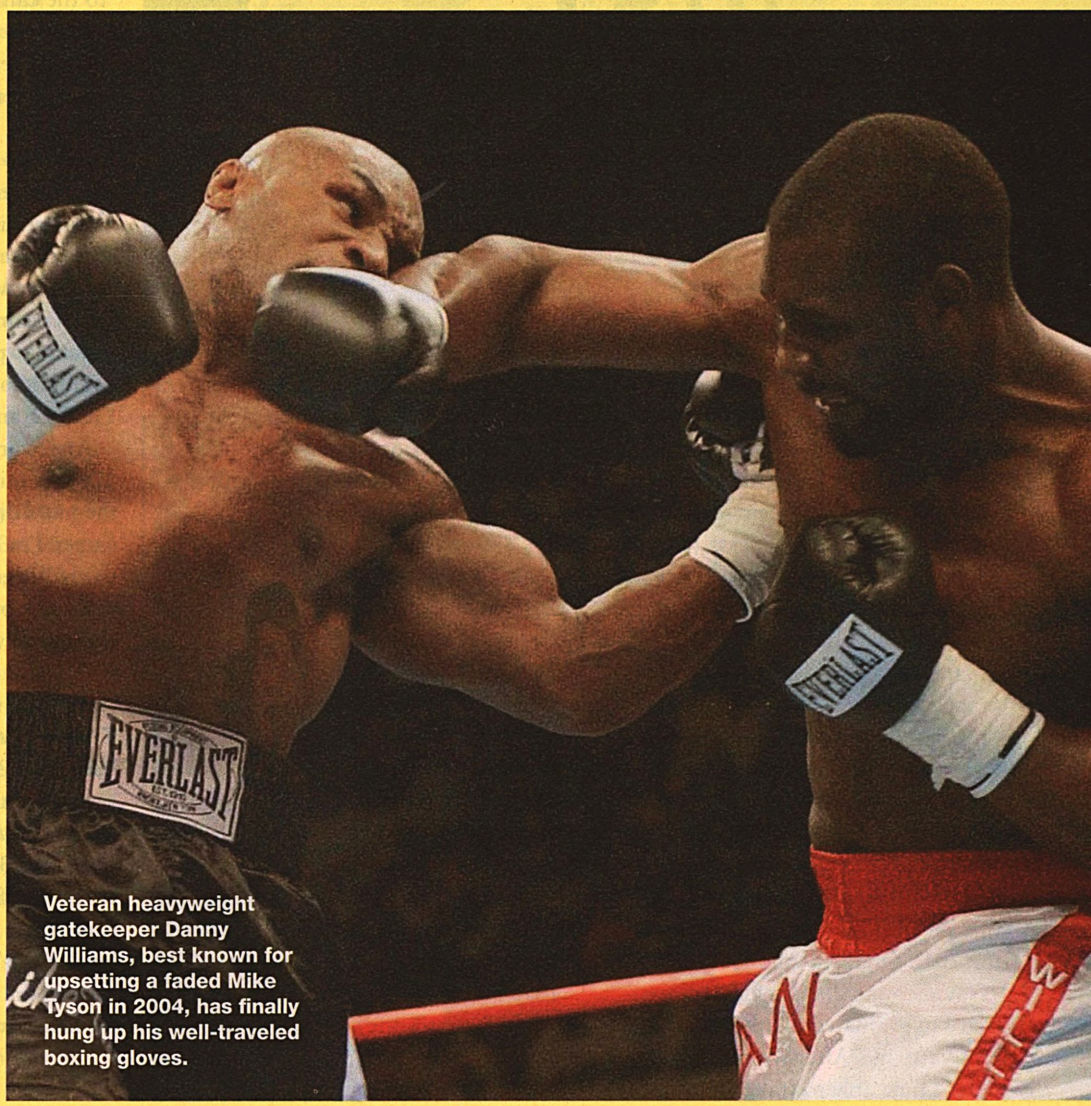
★★★

Danny Williams, who fought and defeated a faded Mike Tyson in 2004, finally called time on his career at the age of 45 after being knocked out by a former lightweight boxer. Yes, a lightweight. It was all over for Williams – final record 52-26, with 39 KOs and KO'd 13 times – as the headline attraction at the Beach Ballroom in Aberdeen, Scotland.

Williams faced Lee McAllister, who stepped up seven divisions for the bout. Williams, once a British and Commonwealth champion and a world title challenger whose most notable scalp was Tyson, joined the paid ranks in 1995, was due to retire several times, and always came back. Not anymore, one suspects.

The British Boxing Board of Control has not wanted to licence Williams to box since 2010, concerned at his well-being. Undeterred, he boxed under a Latvian license and embarked on a trail of fights across mainland Europe for 30-something bouts in Romania, Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic, to name but a few European weekend destinations. I can remember an early interview with Williams when he told me his father, Augustus, used to send him down the gym. He was 9 or 10 at the time. He hated it, used to play table tennis and splash himself with water afterward to make it look like he'd been training. There was nobility in Williams' desire to fight on … his motivation was to earn the money required to pay the fees for his two daughters' private education. "I pushed through it because I wanted to see my girls away from the mad people I grew up with," he said on his social media page. "I just want to earn my money quietly, pay my daughters' fees and sail off." Now Williams has done that. Thanks for the years, Danny, and even turning up to play in a charity cricket match for me one day eons ago to raise money for Great Ormond Street Children's Hospital.

Gareth A Davies is boxing correspondent for the London Telegraph.



Veteran heavyweight gatekeeper Danny Williams, best known for upsetting a faded Mike Tyson in 2004, has finally hung up his well-traveled boxing gloves.

Ryota Murata, Japan's most popular boxer, will return to Las Vegas for the third time on Oct. 20 to face Rob Brant.

JAPAN

BY NICK SKOK

The unusually long saga that was deciding and agreeing on an opponent for Ryota Murata (14-1, 11 knockouts) is finally complete. Esquiva Falcao, Jason Quigley and Rob Brant had all been tied to the Japanese star, with the latter (the mandatory challenger for the WBA "regular" belt the middleweight standout holds) finally getting the deal signed and complete for October 20 in Las Vegas.

"It's the dream of all boxers to headline in Las Vegas, and for me, this is certainly a dream come true," the 2012 Olympic gold medalist said. "Having a mandatory fight means that I'm evaluated highly, and this motivates me. After winning this fight, I'll be able to (take on whoever I want)."

Teiken Gym president and Murata's promoter Akihiko Honda added, "He's not an easy opponent to defeat by KO, but Murata will aim for it anyway."

★★★

Due to Japan Boxing Commission regulations, if a commission physician determines that a boxer suffered any degree of cerebral hemorrhage during training sessions or fights, his license automatically becomes invalid. Ryuya Yamanaka suffered such an injury during his July fight in which he lost his WBO minimumweight title to Vic Saludar.

"[Retirement] came a lot faster than I thought it would, but I want to thank everyone around me for their support." said the 23-year-old at a recent press conference.

"When I first heard that, I couldn't imagine it was happening to me. I have no idea about the future right now." He ends his career with a 16-3 (5 KOs) record.

★★★

Takuma Inoue (12-0, 3 KOs) managed an impressive win over Filipino veteran Mark John Yap (29-13, 14 KOs) on September 11 at the famed Korakuen Hall in Tokyo. With the win, the younger brother of Naoya Inoue becomes the WBC bantamweight mandatory and will be ranked accordingly.

The fight was close enough through the first four that scores from ringside were announced as 39-37, 38-38 and 38-38. That all changed in the fifth with a dazzling left hook from Inoue that sent Yap to the canvas. Inoue maintained solid leverage on Yap through the next three rounds as Yap continued to weather the storm and survive. In the ninth, Yap, now fully recovered, turned up the heat and began a more aggressive but ultimately futile attempt to try and reverse the course of action. Inoue used nice footwork to maintain distance and continue popping shots when openings presented themselves.

Final scores read out as 114-113, 116-111 and 117-110, all for Inoue.

Afterward, Inoue had this to say: "People said I would win, but he was the most difficult opponent of my career. I'm happy to have the chance to challenge for the world title. I'll definitely be a bantamweight world champion with my brother Naoya."

★★★

Three-division titleholder Akira Yaegashi (27-6, 15 KOs) got a nice seventh-round TKO against Hirofumi Mukai on August 17 at Korakuen Hall. The 35-year-old is seeking a crack at a fourth division belt, this time at the junior bantamweight level. With such an entertaining scrap now in the books, his chances look a bit brighter.

★★★

Newly minted WBO junior lightweight titleholder Masayuki Ito is tentatively slated to return during Japan's busy New Year's Eve fight week. He could face WBO No. 1-ranked Evgeny Chuprakov (20-0, 10 KOs) next. "This is my starting line [as champion]," said Ito. "I want to have big fights both in Japan and abroad!"

★★★

2012 Olympic bronze medalist Satoshi Shimizu scored a fourth-round TKO against Shingo Kawamura to improve his record to 7-0 (7 KOs). Shimizu defeated current WBO junior featherweight titleholder Isaac Dogboe on the path to his medal-winning performance.

★★★

In a spate of setbacks for Japanese boxing, Ryosuke Iwasa lost his IBF junior featherweight title to TJ Doheny while another 122-pound title fight saw Hidenori Otake brutally knocked out in the first round by Dogboe. The 37-year-old Otake (31-3-3, 14 KOs) should call it a night on his career and hang 'em up, though he said afterward in the locker room: "My feeling is that I'd like to continue, and if I get the chance, then I'd like to. I want to think about it further."

★★★

His career once thought to be over, Kazuto Ioka (23-1, 13 KOs) returned for Superfly 3 on September 8 in Inglewood, California, and scored an impressive unanimous decision victory over McWilliams Arroyo. There was no apparent ring rust on Ioka, who promised that his unretirement after almost 17 months out of the ring wouldn't be a factor. That much was evident when Ioka connected with a flush right that sent Arroyo to the canvas in Round 3. Ioka is looking to become Japan's first four-division title winner.

Contact Nick Skok @NoSparring on Twitter

PHILIPPINES

BY RYAN SONGALIA

The road to Manny Pacquiao-Floyd Mayweather Jr. was paved in broken glass as fans were subjected to neverending public negotiations and haggling over who was the "A-side" and who was the "B-side." While that was to be expected in a high-stakes "Fight of the Century" between pay-per-view players, it's unlikely fans would have the same patience for a Pacquiao vs. Amir Khan standoff in 2018.

After Pacquiao reestablished himself with a stoppage of Lucas Matthysse, and Khan climbed off the deck to outpoint Samuel Vargas on September 8, the two former Freddie Roach pupils renewed their annual fight discussion. Unlike in past years, where both sides appeared eager to get on with it, this round sputtered out of the gates. Khan accused Pacquiao of pricing himself out and used his domestic rival Kell Brook as leverage to negotiate, while Pacquiao told reporters "it doesn't sound as if he really wants to fight."

A Pacquiao-Khan fight in 2018-19 would not mean much in the grand scheme of the boxing world, and neither are currently in the upper crust of the welterweight title picture. And though it's not a fight that ends up on a lot of wish lists, it's one that enough people would tune in to watch. Khan is now aligned with promoter Eddie Hearn, who has a deep budget with DAZN to broadcast fights and has expressed interest in working

Could Manny Pacquiao, who's way past his prime but remains a worldwide brand, join the exodus to new streaming platform DAZN?

Randy Petalcorin, posing with promoter Jim Claude Manangquil after a recent fight, is headed for a 108-pound title bout against Felix Alvarado in October.

with Pacquiao, and Pacquiao can still generate interest as he inches towards 40. At this point in their careers, with both men closer to retirement than their primes, they'd be missing out on an opportunity to do a nice piece of business together if the fight fails to come to fruition.

Hopefully, Pacquiao and Khan can resolve their row as expeditiously as Pacquiao resolved his with Top Rank over unpaid ESPN+ broadcast fees for the Matthysse fight. Pacquiao made the claim on Instagram and promised legal action before erasing the post's caption and writing it off two days later as a "miscommunication." Top Rank CEO Bob Arum told ESPN that the delay was the result of Pacquiao not having signed the contract for the event, and he assured the matter would be dealt with.

Further complicating the situation, Mayweather resurfaced the weekend of Canelo-Golovkin to announce that a rematch with Pacquiao was in the works.

★★★

For the second straight Asian Games, the Philippines fell short of gold in the boxing event. What happened? ABAP, the country's governing body for amateur boxing, points to judging controversies in the split decision losses of Nesthy Petecio and Eumir Marcial to the eventual gold medalists, but that only tells part of the story about what happened in Indonesia.

Five of the team's eight boxers lost in their opening fights, including 2014 bronze medalist Mario Fernandez, who suffered a bad knockout at the hands of an unheralded Iraqi.

There were some bright spots, though. The most successful boxer was flyweight Rogen Ladon, who fought through cuts accumulated on his way to a bizarre final, which was then stopped due to a headbutt-caused cut on his opponent, Jasurbek Latipov, 15 seconds into the round. Despite barely any action occurring in that round, four of the five judges scored it for the Uzbekistani, awarding him the gold. Marcial won bronze and enhanced his reputation by knocking out unbeaten Macau pro Kuok Kun Ng, and a second bronze medal was earned by junior flyweight Carlo Paalam, who overcame a robbery at the 2017 Southeast Asian Games to become a rising star on the Philippine national team.

The Philippines performed slightly better in 2014, when they earned a silver and three bronzes.

★★★

The Philippines hasn't had an Olympic medal since Mansueto Velasco earned silver in 1996, but the country may get a boost from the pro ranks after Jhack Tepora voiced his interest in representing the country in Tokyo.

"I would like to fight in the Olympics," said Tepora, who had been a member of the national team before turning pro.

"My dream is to be the first Pinoy boxer [to win a] gold medal in the Olympics and to become a world champion."

ABAP Secretary General Ed Picson had previously listed Tepora as one of the pros who still had "amateur DNA in them" and could be assets for future tournaments.

★★★

Randy Petalcorin had originally thought he'd be heading back to Melbourne, Australia – the site of the robbery he sustained against Omari Kimweri in 2016 – only to find out that he'd be getting a home game in his first world title fight.

Petalcorin will face Nicaragua's Felix Alvarado on October 21 in Manila for the IBF junior flyweight title Hekkie Budler just vacated.

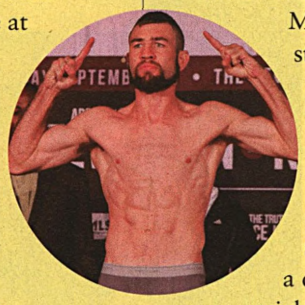
"It's not up to me where we fight; I am happy just to fight," said

Petalcorin.

Promoter Jim Claude Manangquil says Petalcorin (29-2-1, 22 KOs) has been training "like crazy" for this fight, which matches two of the biggest punchers you'll see at 108 pounds.

"Everybody will be shocked during the fight," said Manangquil. "They will a see a different Randy Petalcorin."

The fight will air in the Philippines on ESPN5, the network that has injected lots of life into the local boxing scene since rebranding last year.



Welterweight standout Chris van Heerden

SOUTH AFRICA

BY DROEKS MALAN

With Chris van Heerden's fight against Fredrick Lawson getting postponed due to visa problems, there was a lack of action by South Africans on the international scene in the past month, but that didn't mean that nothing happened.

A crossroads cruiserweight bout for the All African championship grabbed the public's imagination and resulted in a sold-out Emperor's Palace in Gauteng. There are always more casual than hardcore fans, and sometimes you just need two well-matched guys with strong local followings and a good backstory to put butts in seats.

That is what former world-ranked super middleweight and light heavyweight Thomas Oosthuizen and former cruiserweight contender Thabiso Mchunu provided. Oosthuizen was once the golden boy of South African boxing who seemed destined to be a world champion. In recent years his career has sputtered to a standstill with all sorts of trouble outside the ring, ranging from substance abuse to a recent stint in jail, resulting in canceled fights against the likes of Eleider Alvarez and Juergen Braehmer and a good dose of inactivity. He was coming off a layoff of more than a year after his first loss, against solid-but-unspectacular Russian Igor Mikhalkin, and was returning in a much heavier division.

Mchunu's star, in contrast, started to wane inside the ring, going 2-2 in his last fights. He got stopped in a world title challenge of Aleksandr Usyk (definitely no shame in that), won a decision against local trial horse Johnny Muller, lost to now No. 10-ranked Constantin Bejenaru and then stopped a journeyman type in his last fight. He is no longer a contender, but at least he was active.

They may have been well-matched on paper with enough notoriety to create some hype, but there were a few insiders who opined that a match between two southpaw counterpunchers would be guaranteed to stink out the joint. A "Fight of the Year" candidate it certainly wasn't, but it was a compelling chess match over 12 rounds.

The 6-foot-4 Oosthuizen, towering over the much shorter but more solidly built Mchunu, used his height and reach to good effect by circling to his right and moving about the perimeter of the ring, flicking out his jab while Mchunu tried to close the gap. Mchunu slipped and parried the jabs and the odd burst from Oosthuizen well, but there was next to zero coming from him offensively for the first four rounds. He came alive a bit in the fifth round, landing a hard lead left from the southpaw stance, but he was struggling to come to grips with his tall, rangy opponent.

In the sixth, a hard right hook prompted a less effective shoeshine combination from Oosthuizen, who continued boxing on his toes in the next round and let go with another fast flurry when Mchunu got close.

In the eighth, Mchunu started pushing with more urgency, which forced Oosthuizen to backpedal faster. When finally forced to stand his ground, he responded well with body punches punctuated by an uppercut on the inside, but Mchunu answered with a much harder left.

That effectively set the pattern of the fight: Oosthuizen boxing on his toes, looking busy with jabs and short bursts, some missing, some landing, and Mchunu chasing, landing the more telling shots. The ninth saw Mchunu landing a hard right hook at the beginning and another hard left toward the end of the round, sandwiching the flurries and movement from Oosthuizen. The 10th saw some good jabbing by Oosthuizen and a tit-for-tat exchange of lefts at the end of the round, Mchunu's having more pop on them.

The last round was possibly the best, with a lead hook by Mchunu, some exchanges, another right hook-straight left by Mchunu followed by Oosthuizen circling and coasting to the final bell.

Oosthuizen won a majority decision by two scores of 115-113 with the third score even at 114-114, a result that pleased some but angered others who claimed that Mchunu landed the harder, more effective shots. That may be so, but in the end Mchunu has himself to blame. If you are depending on two or three eye-catching shots per round trumping many, less effective punches, then you are gambling on subjective interpretation going your way. He needed to do more.

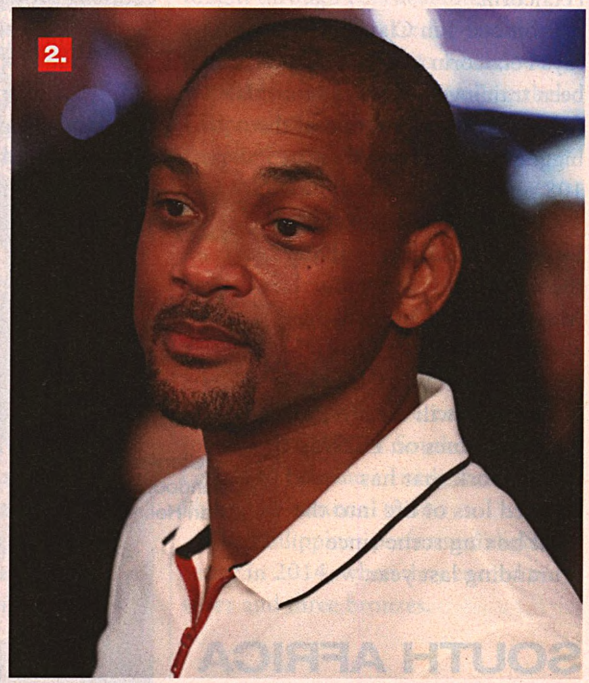
Whether either will again reach the heights they once did remains to be seen. I doubt it, but at least each will make one more decent payday with a rematch scheduled for December 8.

★★★

The next big one for South Africans will be on October 13, when No. 1-ranked bantamweight Zolani Tete will defend his WBO title against former amateur star (but four-fight professional novice) Mikhail Aloyan in another battle of southpaws. It will take place in the hostile territory of Ekaterinburg, Russia, as part of the World Boxing Super Series tournament.

AT THE FIGHTS

BY LAMAR CLARK



STYLES MAKE FIGHTS

Fight night in Las Vegas for Canelo vs. GGG:
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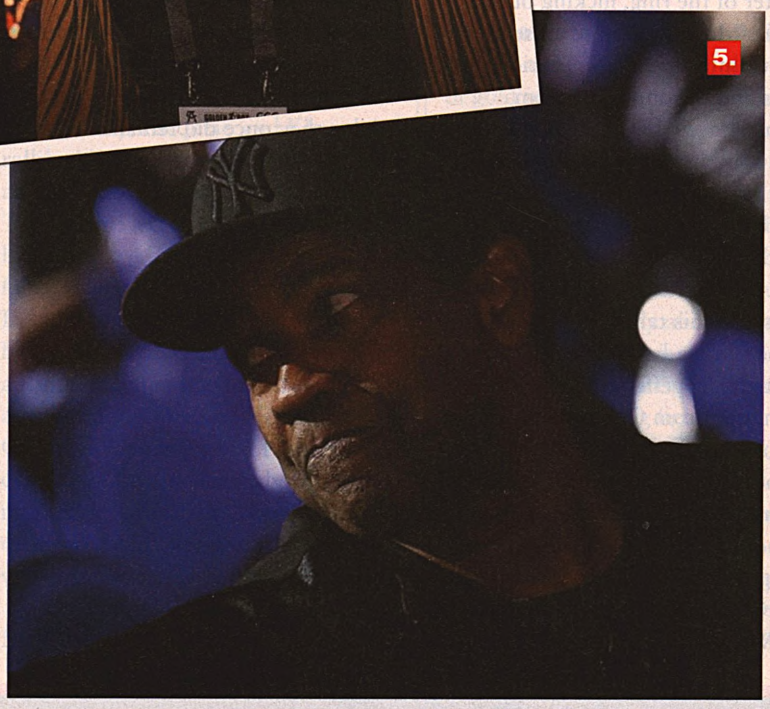
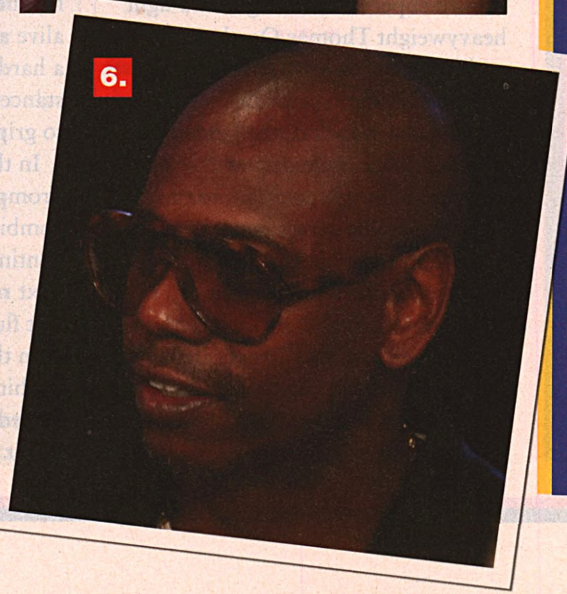
2. Will Smith
3. Ring Magazine's women's P4P champion Cecilia Braekhus
4. Rosie Perez
5. Denzel Washington
6. Dave Chappelle





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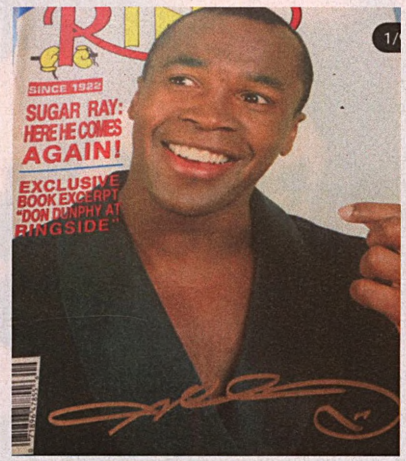

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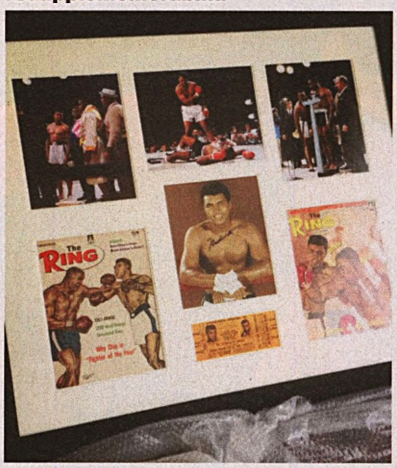

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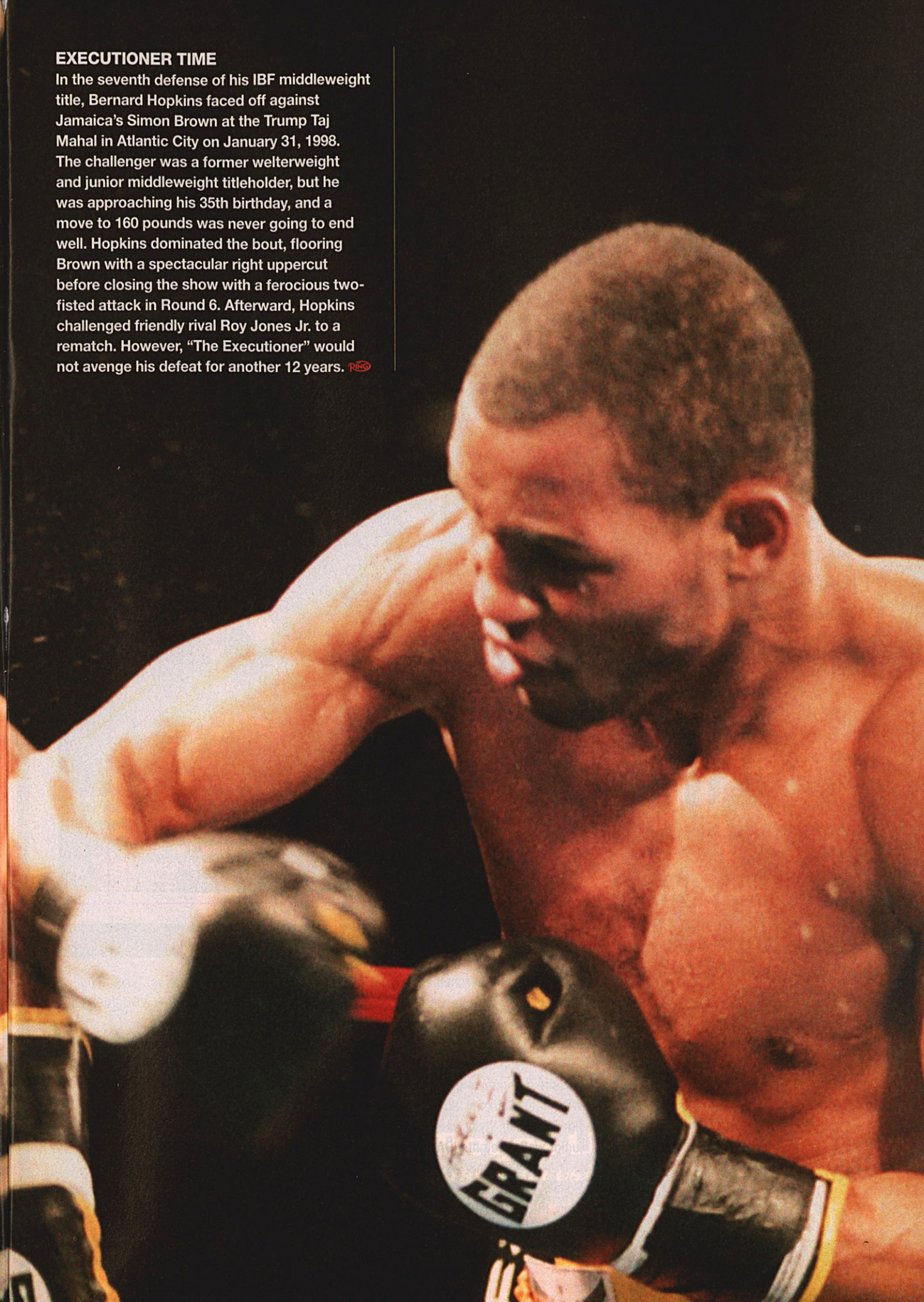
EXECUTIONER TIME

In the seventh defense of his IBF middleweight title, Bernard Hopkins faced off against Jamaica's Simon Brown at the Trump Taj Mahal in Atlantic City on January 31, 1998. The challenger was a former welterweight and junior middleweight titleholder, but he was approaching his 35th birthday, and a move to 160 pounds was never going to end well. Hopkins dominated the bout, flooring Brown with a spectacular right uppercut before closing the show with a ferocious two-fisted attack in Round 6. Afterward, Hopkins challenged friendly rival Roy Jones Jr. to a rematch. However, "The Executioner" would not avenge his defeat for another 12 years. RING



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COMING UP

The intriguing heavyweight matchup between lineal champ Tyson Fury and WBC titleholder Deontay Wilder is set to happen on December 1 at Staples Center in Los Angeles.

NOVEMBER

NOV. 3 – Miguel Berchelt vs. Miguel Roman, junior lightweights (for Berchelt's WBC title), El Paso, Texas (ESPN+).

NOV. 3 – Ryan Burnett vs. Nonito Donaire, bantamweights (for Burnett's WBA title), Glasgow, Scotland. Also fighting: Josh Taylor vs. Ryan Martin, junior welterweights (DAZN).

NOV. 10 – Aleksandr Usyk vs. Tony Bellew, cruiserweights (for Usyk's Ring, IBF, WBA, WBC and WBO titles), Manchester, England (DAZN).

DECEMBER

DEC. 1 – Deontay Wilder vs. Tyson Fury, heavyweights (for Wilder's WBC title), Los Angeles (Showtime PPV).

DEC. 1 – Adonis Stevenson vs. Oleksandr Gvozdyk, light heavyweights (for Stevenson's WBC title), Quebec City, Canada.

DEC. 22 – Josh Warrington vs. Carl Frampton, featherweights (for Warrington's IBF title), Manchester, England.

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